

Wild

AUSTRALIA'S WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

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for bushwalking
Thermal tops



Poster inside

Canoeing hero
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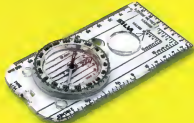
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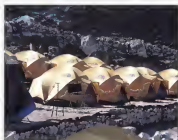
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Cover Sue Baxter enjoying the untrodden Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park, on the summit of Mt Oakleigh, Tasmania. *Chris Baxter*

Wild
AUSTRALIA'S WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE
Established 1981

WARNING

The activities covered in this magazine are dangerous. Undertaking them without proper training, experience, skill, regard to safety, and equipment could result in serious injury or death.



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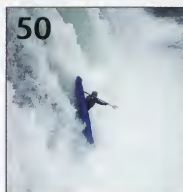
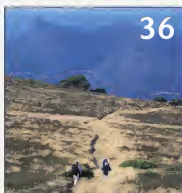
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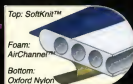
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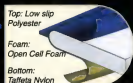


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WHEN YOU PICKED UP THIS ISSUE OF *Wild*, no 90, chances are that you'll have noticed some changes. The milestone of the 90th issue seemed to us a good opportunity to give readers 'a little bit extra' and to do some 'tweaking' of *Wild*. Here is a brief summary: in the first category are the extra pages included in this issue, making it the biggest in years. Another 'extra' is the A2-sized poster (twice the size of all previous *Wild* posters) bound in the middle of the magazine. Neither will be cause for complaint.

On the 'tweaking' front is the new cover design, including the *Wild* logo. Most, if not all, well-known logos change and evolve over time. If done well, this results in almost imperceptible evolution ensuring that the logo retains a fresh and contemporary feel without any single change being so abrupt as to confuse or alienate those familiar with it. For example, Shell Petroleum's well-known logo today is very different from what it was, say, 70 years ago, but I doubt that any one of the numerous changes made to it over this period have caused so much as a ripple. We've put a lot of thought and effort into the new-look *Wild* logo, our first change to it since 1987. Actually, it is many changes, but we are very happy with the overall result, considering that it has an excellent, modern feel but is not so far removed from the old one to 'frighten the horses'. The sharp eyed will notice other, subtle, design changes inside the magazine.

Whilst from time to time we have published special features on important destinations, none has been as extensive as that on the famous Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair National Park that appears in this issue. I had walked the Overland Track as a callow youth, and for the many years since then I had given it little thought as a possible personal goal for another walk. However, revisiting it almost by chance this March, I was greatly moved by the experience and concluded that such a magnificent area—with so much to offer bushwalkers of all levels of experience and ability, and such a significant history—was due for an unusually thorough treatment in *Wild*. I trust that you find our feature appropriately uplifting for such a truly world-class region on our own southern doorstep.

The change in our email system from dial-up to broadband means that staff now

have individual email addresses, which has already resulted in more efficient email communication at *Wild*. See the credits column opposite for the new email addresses. (My email address also appears at the foot of this Editorial.) Another benefit of broadband is that we can now accept advertising and small photos (such as product photos



for inclusion in Gear Survey tables) in digital format by email. (Note, however, that for most photos in *Wild* we still require original transparencies to obtain the necessary quality of reproduction.)

Speaking of email, most letters published in *Wildfire* (Letters to the Editor) are now received by email. These are published with the writer's suburb/town and State. Therefore, please ensure that all such email includes your full postal address.

I look forward to continuing to share ideas with you—along the track and on the electronic super highway! 📧

Chris Baxter
editorial@wild.com.au

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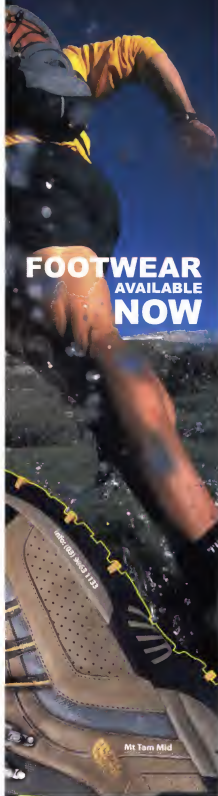
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Moral Fibre

Free advice (from someone who doesn't forget)

YOU WILL UNDOUBTEDLY READ ABOUT the unique and very valuable discovery of ancient and continuous Aboriginal art announced in New South Wales on 1 July. It is located in Wollemi National Park near Sydney (all in the announcement) and is obviously of great value to our Australian history and heritage.

This time act responsibly and do not encourage unauthorised exploration of the site by enthusiastic but misguided bushwalkers, as you so unfortunately did with the Wollemi pines in 2001. In fact if you do publish the news item, accompany it with a very strong *Wild* position that nobody should go near it or in search of the site, at least until permitted and adequately protected (by a full-body condom? Managing Editor).

And if you do disagree with or allow criticism of my advice, then this time please have the moral fibre not to publish cowardly anonymous responses, as you did before (and I haven't forgotten).

John Garrett
Northbridge, NSW

The one I look forward to

Wild is a superb magazine, which seems to improve with each issue, and I look forward to it every three months. I subscribe to only a couple of other regular mags and business journals, and the one I look forward to most is *Wild*. Thank you again, and keep up the brilliant standard.

Alan Moule
Greenvale, Vic

Pioneer's ponderings

As a one-time resident of Tasmania, I look forward eagerly to my quarterly bushwalking nostalgia trip heralded by the arrival of *Wild* through the post-box. It recently occurred to me that among your readers might be someone who could put my mind at rest concerning an unusual rock feature in the Western Arthurs, Tasmania. When I first traversed the range, my log, for 27 December 1960, records "...we set out along the short ridge to Peak 15. Our route lay past a particularly spectacular pair of gendarmes—two towers 60 to 70 feet high—with a tremendous block balanced between them..." For some reason I have no close-up photo of this feature, although it does appear in the background of one of my general, range views. Strangely enough, when I traversed the range again 11 months later, this time south to north, there is no mention of it in my diary, neither

does it appear in any of those photos. Since then I have scanned magazines and books but have never come across a reference to it. Does it then still exist, or has it mysteriously disappeared? It is possible that my two companions on the original trip, Barry Higgins and Pat Conaghan, may have memories or closer photos of this extraordinary structure, which was basically a giant version of the trilithons that make up the UK's well-known Stonehenge.

Congratulations on the quality of *Wild*, a supremely readable production.

John Elliott
St Austell
Cornwall, UK

The *Appalachian Register* of spring 2001 also notes the serious concern there is regarding the impact of trekking poles on their well-walked trails. More recently, whilst walking the southern area of Wilsons Promontory I noticed that on sections of all trails the same impact is becoming apparent along with scratches and chips on rocks from carbide tips.

I acknowledge that some people (aged, disabled, injured...) need to have an aid to stability to be able to walk in our parks, but the environmental impact cannot be ignored and has to be planned for by park management. If this trend towards using trekking poles continues in popular parks, park managers will have to seriously consider restrictions on the number and type of poles walkers can use.

Jeff Moran
Shepparton, Vic

Doing the cairncrain

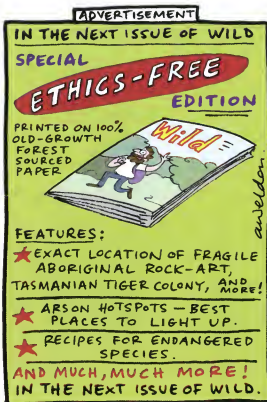
I want to clarify a few points in the article 'A Lofy Challenge' (*Wild* no 87). I am the South Australian Government geologist responsible for the area known as the Musgrave Block which includes Mt Woodroffe. As Nick and Ben Gough state in their article, the area has been difficult to access for tourism and also for geological investigations since it was handed back to the Anangu Pitjantjatjara people in 1981. Recently the Anangu have begun to set up enterprises such as Desert Tracks to encourage tourism and also to encourage scientific research in the area. The Geological Survey of SA seeks to promote geological understanding of the area and to this end we arranged a geological excursion in July 2002... In our discussions to obtain permission from the traditional owners, Peter Nyanguing requested that a walking track be set up for tourists such as Nick and Ben Gough. In June 2002, Joe Firinu (the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Land Council's anthropologist) and I set up cairns along the track indicated to us by Peter Nyanguing. Due to the time involved, we only completed two-thirds of the climb to the summit. We returned in July with our party of geologists to find Nick and Ben the first tourist group to use the track...

Justin Gum
Adelaide, SA

Poler voyagers

I note with interest the developing 'fashion' of using two trekking poles as an aid to propulsion along tracks both overseas and now in Australia. I have read all the supposed therapeutic and stability reasons why walkers should be using trekking poles; however, I also note with concern the impact such poles are having on our trails.

In the Himalayas I have seen tracks so badly eroded by trekking poles that deep ruts occur on either side of the path, and earth ploughed up so badly just waiting for rainfall to erode it further.



Readers' letters are welcome (with sender's full name and address for verification). A selection will be published in this column. Letters of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Write to *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181 or email editorial@wild.com.au

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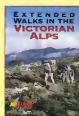
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ALPINE PHOENIX

Assessment of the damage caused by the summer fires continues, with further details forthcoming since Info in *Wild* no 89. The information released earlier in the year assumed the worst in many cases, with huts reported as burnt before 'rising from the ashes' months later. Reconnaissance missions, by helicopter and on foot, have now established the actual fortunes of most huts, and in some cases repair work has begun.

Up to date information from the New South Wales National Parks & Wildlife Ser-

vice adds Boltons Hut, Burrungubuggee Shelter, Grey Hill Cafe and Linesmans 2 Hut to the list of huts destroyed or damaged in Kosciuszko National Park. Back-country enthusiasts should be aware of the loss of huts when planning trips. Derschkos Hut is one of those originally reported as burnt, and this information was repeated in *Wild* no 89. The hut was not destroyed although the fire came very close, reaching the edge of the temporary fire break around it in one place.

Derschkos Hut, the Snowy Mountains, NSW, singed but still standing despite reports of its demise in the January bushfires. Rob Cannon



Yes Fear

The Australian media hype that marked the 50th anniversary of the first ascent of Mt Everest was in no way diminished because it coincided with the first ascent of the world's highest peak by an Australian-born woman! Under the circumstances Sue Fear's (see her profile in *Wild* no 74) ascent was the answer to a copywriter's prayer. It was her third 8000 metre summit after Shishapangma and Cho Oyu.

DEFAME GAME

On 31 May Melbourne's *Age* newspaper reported that a NSW Supreme Court jury had found that the ABC's 'Four Corners' defamed the famous Australian Himalayan mountaineer Tim Macartney-Snape (see his article on his new route on Mt Everest in *Wild* no 15) by implying that he had used his influence to recruit students for an alleged cult. The *Age* reported that the jury also found that the same programme defamed Macartney-Snape by implying that he deceived schools that invited him to talk about Mt Everest by exploiting the occasion to promote the ideas of Jeremy Griffith, a biologist found to have been defamed by the programme as well.

More photographic red tape

A reader has reported that Parks Victoria has restrictions regarding photography in National Parks, as does the NSW Parks & Wildlife Service (see *Wild* no 87, page 17) and the Federal Government (*Wild* no 89, page nine). Parks Victoria's Web site (www.parkweb.vic.gov.au) contains further details about the permit system including requirements and application forms. It seems that those who take photographs for trade or business reasons require permits, while amateur photographers do not. However, if the photographs are later sold, published or displayed, the situation may change. Confused? Read on.

If a licence is required you can apply for an hourly permit, daily permit (\$88) or an Annual Landscape Photography Licence (\$275). Different rates apply for small-, medium- and large-scale photography, and all are subject to conditions. One such stipulation is that photographers 'sensibly and appropriately portray parks, park values, park staff and built assets'.

No trace

Leave No Trace is an organisation which aims to change attitudes to enable individuals, companies and communities to accept responsibility for the conservation of the environment. The programme originated in the USA as a partnership between federal agencies and the National Outdoor Leadership School to combat the degradation of the environment caused by increased visitor numbers. LNT has established an equivalent organisation, in the Kimberley, to protect iconic destinations in Australia. To achieve this, LNT is using public education, contributing support to land and water management agencies and assisting in recreation research as well as forming partnerships with both public and private organisations. For more information about membership, partnerships or activities, email cameron_crowe@nols.edu

Wildness THE FILM

A documentary has been released about two of Australia's greatest wilderness photographers, Olegas Truchanas and Peter Dombrovskis. The film shows how they used their photography to change people's attitude to conservation, their work becoming an integral part of campaigns to protect Tasmania's natural heritage including Lake Pedder and the Franklin River. *Wildness* combines archival film, contemporary footage and over 300 Truchanas and Dombrovskis photographs to capture their relationship, their philosophy and their art. For distribution details email sales@filmaust.com.au



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Fernand Petzl

One of the most influential characters in the manufacture of outdoors gear, Fernand Petzl, died on 31 May at the age of 91. He was an active caver most noted for his early explorations of the Gouffre Berger, France. His explorations in 1956 made it the world's deepest cave at 1122 metres. Originally he tested nylon ropes and manufactured caving ladders. He then turned his hand to the development, refinement and perfection of a

vast range of equipment which now bears his name. For cavers, Petzl is the name in ascenders and descenders, while climbers use his harnesses and bolts, but for everyone else the brand is known for those reliable headtorches which have their origins in caving. His legacy will live on, surreptitiously captured in numerous photos of people enjoying outdoor pursuits.

Stephen Bunton

Ida Bay cave exploration

British caver 'Madphil' Rowsell has been incredibly enthusiastic in his efforts to document the caves at Ida Bay whilst visiting Tasmania over the last few summers. Working mostly with Alan Jackson and Geoff Wise, he has relocated 121 of the 180 known caves and discovered another 25 caves in the process. Discovery is certainly the incentive for these efforts, with the best of the new caves being Rocket Rod's Pot with a depth of 91 metres and a length of 958 metres.

SB



Wild Diary listings provide information about rucksack sports events and instruction courses run by non-commercial organisations. Send items for publication to the Managing Editor, Wild, PO Box 415, Phran, Vic 3181. Email editorial@wild.com.au

September

- 20 Hacking Marathon **C** NSW (02) 9526 5355
20-21 Bendigo Cup Sprint/ Marathon **C** Vic www.canoevic.org.au
21 AV Mountain Running Championships **BR** Vic www.athletic.org.au
21 Canning 5000 Marathon **F3 C** WA (08) 9387 2508
27-28 Glasshouse Mountains Old 100 Mile **BR** www.angeltrails.com/m/glasshousestrail
28 Footscray/Ted Pace Marathon **C** Vic www.canoevic.org.au
28 FNCCC Northern NSW Winter Series Marathon Race 5 **C** NSW (02) 6628 7000
28 PVC—John McLean Marathon Challenge **C** NSW (02) 4735 4296
29-2 Oct NSW Combined High Schools Slalom Championships **C** NSW (02) 6752 2833

October

- 4 Upper Murray Challenge **M** NSW/Vic www.uppermurraychallenge.dragnet.com.au
4-5 Macquarie Marshes Walk **B** NSW (02) 6824 2089
4-5 Gippsland Marathon (Lake Classic) **C** Vic www.canoevic.org.au
5 Concrete Classic Freestyle **C** NSW (02) 4730 4333
5 NSW Slalom Championships **C** NSW (02) 4730 4333
5 Australian Orienteering Championships **R** Vic www.vicorienteering.asn.au
10-13 Tentative Level 2 Slalom Coaching Course **C** NSW (02) 4729 4256
11 Educia Mini-marathon **C** Vic www.canoevic.org.au
11 Howqua River Race **C** Vic www.canoevic.org.au
11 Wyong Marathon **C** NSW (02) 4359 1808
11 Spring 12 hr **R** SA (08) 8271 2712
11 Spring 12 hr **R** WA (08) 9342 9213
11-12 Freydoni Lodge Challenge **M** Tas (03) 6248 9049
11-12 24 hr NSW Championships **R** NSW (02) 9990 3480
11-12 24 hr Vic Championships **R** Vic (03) 9438 6626
12 Country Series Slalom Race 3 **C** Vic (03) 9816 9411
12 Murray Marathon Classic (Swan Hill) **C** Vic www.canoevic.org.au
12 Adventure Series Race **M** Old www.adventureseries.com.au
18 SGKC NSW 10 000 Championships **C** www.canoevic.org.au

- 18 Fitzroy Falls Fire Trail Marathon **BR** NSW www.fitzroyfallsmarathon.com
19 BOKC Northern NSW Marathon Series Race 6 **C** NSW 0418 656 770
19 VicSprint Race 1 8th Ward **C** Vic www.canoevic.org.au
19 Metrogaine **R** Old (07) 3262 7721
25 Sarwon Mini-marathon **C** Vic www.canoevic.org.au
25 NSW State Marathon Championships **C** NSW (02) 4577 3012
25-26 NSW State Wild-water Team Selection Race **C** NSW (02) 6554 7194
26 Yarra Slalom Series Race 5 **C** Vic (03) 9816 9411
26 Adventure Series Race **M** NSW www.adventureseries.com.au

November

- 1 Goulburn Marathon Classic **C** Vic www.canoevic.org.au
1-2 Ninth Australian Masters Games Marathon **C** ACT www.canoe.org.au
1-2 Tentative Coaches Slalom Development Workshop **C** NSW (02) 4729 4256
1-4 Four Peaks Mountain Run **BR** Vic http://brightalpineclimb.netc.net.au
4-6 Ninth Australian Masters Games Flat Water **C** ACT www.canoe.org.au
6 6/12 hr **R** ACT www.act.rogaine.asn.au
8 12 hr (Handicap) Challenge **R** Vic (03) 9438 6626
8-9 Hawkesbury Canoe Classic **C** NSW (02) 9666 7786
8-9 National Pre-Winter Freestyle Team Selection **C** NSW (02) 4730 4333
8-9 8 hr Upside-down **R** Old (07) 5497 9261
8-9 24 hr Tas Slalom Championships **R** Tas www.rtas.asn.au
9 Bridge to Bridge Marathon **C** Vic www.canoevic.org.au
9 Yarra Slalom Series Race 6 **C** Vic (03) 9816 9411
9 Adventure Series Race **M** ACT www.adventureseries.com.au
9 3 hr **R** Old (07) 4033 0908
15 3 hr Mini-gaine and barbecue **R** SA (08) 8271 2712
16 Vic Down River Championships **C** Vic www.canoevic.org.au
16 VicSprint Regatta 1 **C** Vic www.canoevic.org.au
23 Vic Country Slalom Series **C** Vic (03) 9816 9411
23 Wagga Marathon **C** NSW (02) 6925 1499
23 Adventure Series Race **M** Vic www.adventureseries.com.au

- 23 Sociagaine **R** NSW (02) 9990 3480
28-30 Flat-water Sprint Development Camp **C** Vic www.canoevic.org.au
29-30 Vic Slalom Championships **C** Vic www.canoevic.org.au

December

- 6 8th Ward Memorial Marathon **C** Vic www.canoevic.org.au
6-7 Vic Slalom Championships **C** Vic (03) 9549 4251
7 VicSprint Race 2 **C** Vic www.canoevic.org.au
7 Adventure Series Race **M** Tas www.adventureseries.com.au
7-8 CT Tie State Slalom Championships **C** Tas www.canoevic.org.au
7-8 Vic State Slalom Championships **C** Vic www.canoevic.org.au
14 Footscray Murray Marathon Dress Rehearsal **C** Vic 0412 112 924
27-31 Red Cross Murray Marathon **C** NSW (03) 8327 7706

January

- 4-11 2004 Australian Slalom Canoe/Kayak Championships **C** Vic (03) 9459 4251
9-11 AC Grand Prix 1 **C** Vic www.canoe.org.au
19-25 Pre-Winter Freestyle **C** NSW (02) 4730 4500

February

- 7-8 12 hr Upside-down **R** WA www.wa.rogaine.asn.au
8 12 hr **R** Tas www.rtas.asn.au
13-15 AC Grand Prix 2 **C** NSW www.canoe.org.au
14-15 AC International Slalom and Olympic Selection Event **C** NSW (02) 9552 4500
29 Canoe rogaine **C** Vic http://vra.rogaine.asn.au

March

- 6 Autumn 6 hr **R** WA www.wa.rogaine.asn.au
10-14 Australian Canoe/Kayak Flat-water Championships **C** NSW www.canoe.org.au
13 Six Foot Track Marathon **BR** NSW www.sixfoot.com

April

- 3 Autumn 12 hr **R** WA www.wa.rogaine.asn.au
3-4 8 hr/Rowing 15 hr **R** Vic http://vra.rogaine.asn.au
3-4 10 hr Canoe/Foot **C** Tas www.rtas.asn.au

Activities: **B** bushwalking, **BR** bush running, **C** canoeing, **M** multisports, **R** rogaining, **S** skiing. Organisations: **AC** Australian Canoeing, **AV** Athletics Victoria, **BOKC** Bonville Creek Kayak Club, **CT** Canoeing Tasmania, **FNCCC** Far North Coast Canoe Club, **PVC** Parrish Valley Canoeing, **SGKC** St George Kayak Club. Rogaining events are organised by the State rogaining associations. Victorian canoeing events are organised by Canoeing Victoria unless otherwise stated.

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Despite the usual route being burnt by bushfires in December, the flooding of the rerouted track and subsequent one month postponement, the Oxfam Trailwalker was successfully completed on 13–15 June. The 100 kilometre endurance event begins at Hunters Hill, Sydney, and ends at North Harbour Reserve by Mt Ku-ring-gai. Excitement was added by teams having to wade or swim across inlets flooded by the high tide around Mt Ku-ring-gai. The winning team, Powered by LANSA, finished the race in 12 hours 58 minutes, just 17 minutes short of the Gurkhas record. The aptly named We're Last came in two minutes before the event's end, 47 hours and 58 minutes after the starting pistol.



Leaders of the pack, Oxfam Trailwalker, Sydney. Martin Wurt

SCROGGING

- A new national organisation has been formed to represent the interests of **Australian bushwalkers**—from community organisations to volunteer leaders and individual walkers. The council of Bushwalking Australia has representatives from each State walking federation, with South Australia's Bill Gehling as President. Further information will soon be available from www.bushwalking.org.au
- Peter Franklin reports that there has been an extension to the track leading to **the Labyrinth**, a popular side-trip from Tasmania's Overland Track. The new track starts at Cyane Lake shortly



View of Mt Geryon from the new lookout above Cyane Lake in the Labyrinth, Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park, Tasmania. Peter Franklin

- after a steep descent from the lookout at the end of the Parthenon. The 500 metres of well-constructed track are not signposted at present. At the junction, take the right fork that leads up a fairly gentle climb to the top of a hill with great views of the surrounding area. From Pine Valley Hut it is a steady climb of about one hour to the Parthenon and close to a further hour to reach the lookout hill above Cyane Lake.
- French cavers on the Guizhou 2003 expedition to **China** discovered the **world's deepest free-fall entrance shaft** (424 metres) in Baiyudong (Gouffre de la Pluie Blanche or White Rain Cave). Stephen Bunton writes that it is located near the village of Heibai and the great basalt escarpments of Dabashan.
- It has been suggested that about 50 000 Australians, including bushwalkers, are **allergic to the sting of the common jumper ant**. A medical team has developed a **new vaccine** that it claims is effective but cannot be made available to the public for want of government funding. Interested readers are asked to support an approach to the Federal Government for funding by writing to the Secretary, Department of Health and Aging, GPO Box 9848, Canberra, ACT 2601.
- Melbourne's **spring planting festival** started on 20 August and tackled eight major sites in the Port Phillip catchment.
- It was also Greening Australia Victoria's coming of age—it celebrated 21 years of community involvement. For more information, phone (03) 9457 3024 or look at Parks Victoria's Web site www.parkweb.vic.gov.au
- Want to take part in the **Murray Marathon** but don't have a team? This year the Red Cross has a service to link paddlers to local paddling clubs. Email findateam@vic.redcross.org.au for more information.
- An **exhibition of alpine photography** by Barbara Bryan and Jan Glover will take place in Sydney in November and December. It will feature photographs of the Australian Alps, including the bush-fire aftermath. Phone (02) 9411 3114 for more information.

Corrections and amplifications

Black Diamond headtorches are made in China, not in the USA as stated in the survey on page 71 of *Wild* no 86. The photographs on pages 40 and 42 of *Wild* no 89 are from the Goulburn Historical Society, not from Peter Hanson as labelled. One Planer's Styx 1 rucksack is constructed from 12-ounce canvas, not synthetic material as stated in the rucksack survey on page 57 of *Wild* no 89.

Readers' contributions to this department, including high-resolution digital photos or colour slides, are welcome. Typed items of less than 200 words are more likely to be published. Send them to *Wild*, PO Box 415, Pahrnan, Vic 3181 or email editorial@wild.com.au

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The Wander Dogs

Quentin Chester sniffs the wind



'I'll help them to set up camp!' Iain and Fiona Groves

THERE ARE TIMES, EVEN IN THE BUSH, WHEN we all need a mistress. I'm talking here about a different kind of companion. One who understands sudden urges. A willing accomplice in activities not always endorsed by responsible, upstanding citizens.

My own mistress is extremely accommodating. She's always eager to indulge my whims and fancies; no questions asked. On cold nights she keeps me warm and I love the way she wobbles her pert little bottom when she gets excited. In fact she's just about perfect. Alas, however, she also likes to eat kangaroo turds.

This babe I speak of is Cassie, my four-year-old border terrier. She's compact and lively with a wiry coat and a whiskered snout. Ever alert, Cassie's a true terrier, a creature bred to chase, seek out and latch on to her quarry. She is not easily dissuaded from her mission.

Since her puppy days Cass has always stalked me around the house. The usual go is that she spies me from the other end of the hallway and then sprints wildly to latch on to my ankle. Getting her to let go is almost impossible. It's like sharing a house with Tony Liberatore on amphetamines.

But such 'terrierist acts' are a mere trifle compared with her true crusade. You see, Cassie has dedicated her life to eating. The

quest for food occupies every waking moment and seems to dominate her lip-twitching dreams. This mania has nothing to do with actual hunger. No, she simply believes the universe is a desolate wasteland unless she is scarfing into something.

In fact just about anything will do. Her omnivorousness goes beyond scavenging scraps or things like festering bones or horse poo. For Cassie, if it has molecular structure, it's fare game. This includes soap, scented candles and even the kid's glitter crayons. She is expert at snaffling items by stealth. From the toiletry bags of house guests she has thieved everything from lip gloss and haemorrhoid cream to antidepressant tablets. And it's always a bit of a conversation stopper when she trots through the lounge with a visitor's used tampon dangling from her lips.

There is, nevertheless, one other thing that Cassie likes to fit into her busy schedule of DIY banqueting. She likes to run. I'm sure this activity is intimately linked to her all-you-can-eat philosophy of life. But, from my point of view, taking her for walks in the bush near our home gives me a handy excuse to skive off.

There was a time in my life when I needed no such pretext to indulge in an afternoon of sky gazing and leafy light. It seemed as

though every second day there were offers to disappear from town and charge up a gorge or throw oneself at some sunny crag. But the group of fellow escapists to which I belonged has moved on. Alas, truancy is not in vogue.

Although my journeys with Cassie may not rank among the great expeditions of our time, at least they keep me grounded to the rhythms of being on foot. After all, our two species have enjoyed 17 000 years of coexistence. There is something liberating about sharing the outdoors with a four-legged colleague. When Cassie scampers off into the scrub she carries no map or guidebook. She blithely ignores track markers and interpretive signs. Instead, she is a willing slave to her senses, sniffing the ground with relish and pausing often to listen intently or peer into the distance.

The intensity of her interest alerts me to nuances in nature that I would otherwise overlook. More than this, she reconnects me to my instinctive self, to a visceral way of being. It seems to me that we humans make too much of pretending to be clever. After a while our sophistication feels like a treadmill, a prison of minimalist interiors and sterile arguments. Hanging out with Cassie is a healthy reminder of what others say is blindingly obvious: that I, too, am a

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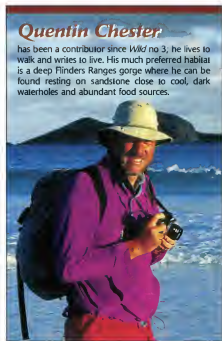
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yelping, brutish creature, a humble cotenant in the animal kingdom.

Among certain bushwalking circles the idea of sauntering through a National Park with a dog is regarded as very poor form, a bit like farting in church. People primly clad in the latest walking outfits and clutching crisply folded maps have been known to cast stern, derisive looks as they pass us by. It's as though they've never seen a scruffy, slobbering mouth or an animal take a dump before. And then they notice that I've got a dog as well. You just can't please some people, can you?



Quentin Chester

has been a contributor since W&L no 3, he lives to walk and writes to live. His much preferred habitat is a deep Flinders Ranges gorge where he can be found resting on sandstone close to cool, dark waterholes and abundant food sources.

This is what I mean about the virtue of having a mistress. Cassie is a fellow vagrant, a suitably disreputable partner who comes without expectations or baggage—if you discount fleas and intestinal parasites. Aside from the charm of seeing the natural world through her bright eyes, the real advantage is that her companionship is offered free of angst. Indeed, she seems to express a jaunty, bottom-wiggling delight in being able to scurry through the bush with her very own two-legged tramp.

This is a welcome relief from enduring the company of walkers who struggle to enter the spirit of the occasion. It seems that a lot people go for a walk more out of reflex than enthusiasm. Often these characters end up spending the time grouching about their marriage or some other imbroglio. Then there are those who worry about 'doing the right thing' or fret ceaselessly about the environment. It's getting to the stage where people see weeds at every turn and can't feel the sun on their cheeks without despairing about global warming.

Belair National Park in the Adelaide Hills is just the kind of stomping ground that drives wilderness pedants crazy. From a lot of angles it looks as if those bits not being strangled by blackberries have been laid waste for roads, ovals and tennis courts. It is forest denuded, and at some point in post-

adolescence I decided it was unworthy of me and spent 20 years sanctimoniously avoiding the place. Then along came Cassie.

In my case it was not so much life as a second childhood that began at forty. Some blokes get red convertibles to ease their mid-life crises. I was presented with a puppy and a football. As it happened these gifts probably saved my body from ossifying in a desk-bound stoop. Every day I was forced out to the beach where I could lob the footy and watch a small, furry missile tear across the sand in mad pursuit.

By the time we moved house to the hills, my outings with Cassie had become less ballistic and more exploratory. Inevitably we found ourselves meandering among the tracks in Belair. Of course Cassie is blissfully untroubled by the park's man-made intrusions and she trots through the scrub merrily inhaling the whiffs of animal and vegetable. To her the world simply makes eminent scents. Doubtless this enthusiasm is not the only infectious thing she's shared but thanks to her I've been reunited with the park's wilder reaches.

Just the other day we were cruising along Workanda Creek, far from the picnic crowds. Recent rains had rejuvenated the bush, putting a sheen back into the droopy-eared leaves of the golden wattle. Overhead the manna-gum canopy was in creamy flower, to the delight of the rosellas. Meanwhile, Cassie was taking in moist, peaty aromas at ground level, circling wildly when she picked up the scent of a koala or rabbit. We drifted along, each doing our own thing but still staying in touch with one another.

This style of travel—wandering at will and following one's nose—is more or less how I got into bushwalking in the first place. Belair National Park served as an extension of my backyard and as a kid I would take off from home with Rusty, the pudgy beagle of my boyhood, and we would tour the gullies and ridges rising eastward into the hills. These 'runs' were ostensibly about getting me fit for school sport but, given Rusty's waddling progress, our journeys became more like gentlemanly rambles. And so by degrees I was inducted into the carefree, sensory abandon that dogs have made an art form.

Through these excursions I came to fall into a particular tempo of walking. My progress felt metronomic. In this drifting, meditative condition I found myself registering signals from my surroundings with little conscious effort. In a few strides I was taking in the way the stringybarks scattered the light, sudden orchid bursts of blue or yellow, the scrunch of particular gravels, trunks tattooed by possum claws, the heavy aroma of wattle blossom...In such a state the passing of time seemed loopy and erratic. Entire hours slipped by without me realising. In other moments, when a big branch fell or a brown snake glided past, it was as if the world had juddered to a halt.

So it was that Rusty and I could set off for a quick run and not return until hours later, well into the darkness had rolled over us. My parents grew accustomed to these strange

homecomings. I still told them I was 'going for a run' but for me the park had long ceased to be a training venue. Instead, it served as a gateway to something altogether more impulsive and dimly irresponsible. By accident I came to believe that bushwalking was not necessarily a daggy pastime with clubs and rules but a much deeper provocation—an invite to a different way of being alive. Inevitably, this meant that my mound and I often got lost, cold and wet.

On one such foggy evening we became separated and I had no idea what track I was on. I began to panic, dashing uphill until I thought my lungs would burst. Then, after collapsing on to a grassy bank, I heard a sound I hadn't noticed before, a succession of short, deep yowls. It took me a good ten minutes of tracking the sound cross-country to find that it was Rusty waiting on the track that would lead us home. He stood there grinning in the gloom. I gave him a pat, but it was only after running my hand along his tacky flanks that I realised his pleasure had less to do with seeing me than with the fresh emu shit he'd proudly smeared all over himself.

This is just one of many sordid reminders that there are things we probably don't need to share with canines. It's true I could do without their farts in the car. As it happens, my boot does not ever need rooting. And for once I would like to eat breakfast without the sound of them slurping at their genitals. Nevertheless, despite these and many other crimes against decorum, I feel an almost ridiculous debt of gratitude to my dogs.

Through their fraternity I am allowed to enter a deluxe kind of solitude without ever being claimed by loneliness. They teach me about an eruptive joy in things natural. Like the very walking life they exult in, dogs betray uncomplicated truths, urging one to share alternative reality where you are free to roam.

The depth of my appreciation—plus a desire to save my ankles—drove the decision to find Cassie a suitable furry associate. Our choice was based on the not always reliable principle that if a little of something is good, a whole lot more will be even better. And so it came to pass that we became the custodians of Xena, a two-year-old female Great Dane.

Our friends thought we were bonkers. In almost every respect they were right. You see, a Dane is not a dog, it's a lifestyle. Xena is big and very black—think Darth Vader with a tongue. For all her imposing presence, she is really a clown and a pathetic sook. Xena the Worrier Princess is more like it. Which is why Cassie, the tender with attitude, remains the top dog. In cahoots they're a dangerous combination. They terrorise visitors and when not disporting themselves on beds and furniture they're ransacking the kitchen. Yet, for all this, my gratitude is undimmed. You see, now I have two mistresses, two reasons to take flight and sniff the wind. ☺

Quentin Chester

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*An unfamiliar view of a familiar peak,
the North Face of the Acropolis seen
from the South Spur of Mt Geryon.*
Peter Franklin

-LAKE ST CLAIR



AN ENDURING CLASSIC WALK

Overlanding

Tasmania's most sought-after bushwalk; a reappraisal by *Chris Baxter*



Sue Baxter on Mt Ossa, with Cradle Mountain, left, and Mt Oakleigh (with its pinnacles) in the background.
All photos Chris Baxter

THE OVERLAND TRACK—WHICH RUNS BETWEEN Tasmanian icons Cradle Mountain and Lake St Clair—is a walk every bushwalker has done, or plans to do. So it seems, anyway. Indeed, in recent times it has felt the feet of many others, too. This latter group includes legions of 20-something, overseas backpackers on their Australian tour, and 'wunce-only wilderness wannabes' taking time out from their comfortable, suburban life for the guided, private-hut version of the walk.

When I walked the track with three other 17-year-olds less than two-thirds of the way through last century, backpackers and guided walkers weren't to be seen anywhere, let alone on multiday Tasmanian bushwalks. In those days only the hardest Australian bushwalkers ventured to Tasmania, and the South-west, in particular, was a last frontier—undeveloped, untracked and relatively unexplored. On the equipment front, oiled japara parkas were just beginning to replace rubberised cape-groundsheets as the rainwear of choice. Similarly, H-frame rucksacks were replacing A-frames, and tents were single-skin affairs with neither poles nor floors. Sleeping-mats? We'd never heard of them.

'Bushwalking clothing' was in the same category as painting- and gardening clothing today—clothing that is simply too disreputable for any other use but such fabric- and fashion-hostile activities.

Of the walk itself, only certain memories remain. The huts were relatively basic, and the track both muddy and uncrowded. Coming from Victoria none of these—with the

'The hardened Tasmanian bushwalker—out with "the boys"—was instantly smitten by the young German backpacker.'

exception of the mud—struck us as noteworthy. Track-side tales with other walkers seemed to revolve around the subject of snakes, which freaked us for we had neither long trousers nor gaiters. Inveterate peak baggers even then, the peaks impressed us for their relatively alpine form and precipitous cliffs. The few surviving photos show us proudly atop Cradle Mountain and Bam Bluff, convinced that we were well on the way to achieving our dream of becoming

'real mountaineers'. Despite these energetic detours, we walked from Waldheim to Windermere on the first day. And whilst starting with grandiose plans of bagging every peak in the park, that was to remain our quota. 'Snake talk' on the early fine days, followed by uncomfortably wet weather, had us sprint though the park without further deviation except for a quick side-trip to Pine Valley Hut. Not surprisingly, what I do remember of the trip is tinged with a sense of anticlimax.

Despite this adolescent disappointment, and much of a lifetime spent on other, seemingly more desirable, trips (including several exciting climbing trips to the soaring cliffs of the Acropolis and Mt Geryon), for some time

I harboured the nagging suspicion that the Overland Track warranted a second look. Revered Tasmanian track-notes author John Chapman's advice that the walk is, indeed, one of the best in that State of 'golden walks' was what really set things in motion for a revisit. My wife Sue was keen to do this walk, so when we saw an opportunity to steal a week or so in March we seized it eagerly. Tasmania's infamous weather is about as good as it gets in March, we reasoned, and we



should miss the worst of the Overland Track's summer hordes.

Notwithstanding John's words, I did suspect the worst. Consequently I approached the venture with enthusiasm tempered by lurking suspicions of environmental degradation, a relatively dull and unchallenging experience and just too many people, most of whom 'shouldn't be there'.

The extensive tourist infrastructure at the northern end of the park did nothing to allay my concerns. Cradle Mountain was apparently being milked for all it was worth in extracting the tourist dollar. The first step is on to boardwalk, straight out of the car park. And things weren't helped by a commercial group starting the walk at the same time we did. In addition, unlike my first day on the track all those years ago, the weather was atrocious. By the time we gained the barren plateau below Cradle Mountain—the most exposed walking of the entire trip—peak bagging was right off the agenda. Violent wind, driving rain and hail, frigid conditions and 20 metre visibility made sure of that. Despite having the best modern clothing and equipment, our boots were already full of water and all but a few parts of our bodies were soaked to the skin. Indeed, merely reaching Waterfall Valley Hut and securing dry sleeping space inside seemed a more than sufficient challenge for the day. Pitch the tent? Forget it!

As might be expected under these conditions, the impressive-looking new hut was crowded, and the resident ranger suggested that we try the much smaller and more basic old hut nearby instead. Resident rangers! Hut capacity taxed even in March! Things were not looking good and I feared that my scarcely concealed prejudices were indeed to be confirmed, and in a big way!

A lone, young, German backpacker welcomed us to 'his' hut. Shortly before dark we were joined by a second, young, German backpacker walking the track in the opposite direction. This lone walker was particularly wet and bedraggled. Like his fellow countryman, his garbage-bag 'parka' and other inappropriate gear had been well tested and found sorely wanting. Both were newcomers to overnight walking and were burdened with items needed for the rest of their Australian travels but redundant to their bushwalking needs. However, we were immediately won by their unquenchable enthusiasm, undaunted attitude and the undeniable attraction and charm of their blissful unawareness of the possible difficulties, problems and dangers of their approach. We found this a refreshing contrast to the careful, cosseted and conservative approach which is in danger of removing

of canned and bottled food (a pom, who else?) to hair-driers in a weird and wonderful array of packs, they certainly provided all the 'colour and movement' you could wish for. (Indeed, as conventionally equipped and experienced bushwalkers, we were decidedly the odd ones out along the track!)

At the extraordinarily spacious and well-appointed new Pelion Hut we met an appealing pair of young German women and the equally interesting Australian husband of one of them. This threesome enchanted their fellow walkers with their account of the couple's first meeting and subsequent, halting courtship. Walking in opposite directions, they had met briefly when their paths crossed in the mire between Pelion and Windermere Huts. The hardened Tasmanian bushwalker—out with 'the boys'—was instantly smitten by the young German backpacker. His mates dared him to give her his phone number—he proffered his business card instead. It seems that her interest was sufficiently piqued for her to resist her sensible instincts and all sound, motherly counsel by subsequently phoning him. It was his work number and he took the call over a speaker phone whilst in a meeting with a group of incredulous workmates... When we met

them they had returned to mark the tenth anniversary of that first meeting—accompanied by Annette's friend and wedding witness, Heike—by again walking the track.

Leaving Tim in the hut to nurse an injured knee, we accompanied the two young women on a side-trip to Mt Oakleigh. It was a memorable day, not only for the excellent walking. On reaching the summit we were entertained by a full rendition, in German, of what we were informed was 'the Heide song', apparently the theme song from a children's programme on German TV and adopted as their 'summit song' by the pair. We came to refer to them out of earshot as 'the Strudel Sisters'.

Given the numbers intent on walking it, the Overland Track and its environs show little of the impact you might expect. This is largely the result of sound management practices by Parks Tasmania, including a highly visible walker-education programme, and of large sums of money poured into protecting the region. Walkers are able to walk the track for the cost of an annual Tasmanian Parks pass, which is just \$13.50. This is absurdly underpriced and doesn't come close to the cost of maintaining the track. I am sure that walkers would generally be willing, and could afford, to pay \$100 or more to walk the whole track.

Most of the track has been hardened or otherwise improved to protect the immediate environment. Much of it is duck-boarded, particularly on the notoriously fragile and muddy button-grass plains. Walkers are requested to keep to the tracks and it would seem that they do. Just metres on either side of the track the landscape is



Despite the signs, this boot obviously lost its way.

the spontaneity and fun from so much of our recreation, not least from bushwalking.

Because people walking the Overland Track tend to stay in them, the fine huts situated at regular intervals along the way have concentrations of walkers and are focal points of the walk. Having spent much of our walking lives avoiding people, we found this an unexpected bonus. Although after our first night we found the huts progressively less crowded, they were still lively places and not for the reclusive or those whose sleep is precious and may be disturbed by raucous snoring. Most of our fellow travellers were like the two Germans—young backpackers with limited walking experience and on extended visits to Australia from overseas. Most were Continental Europeans, but many other countries, from South Africa to Canada—not to mention the odd, ubiquitous pom and American—were represented. Cheerfully lugging everything from quantities

pristine. Walkers also rigidly adhere to the fuel-stove-only policy applicable in the region, are meticulous concerning litter and avoid other destructive behaviour such as bad toileting and washing practices. The huts and their appointments are so attractive that most camping is confined to them, including on tent platforms provided at most. Extremely well designed and constructed, most huts are spacious, clean, light and have plenty of space to hang wet gear. I was amazed to see that many have gas heating (which can only be used when the ambient temperature falls below 8° C). In addition, each hut has a pair of clean and efficient composting toilets (just one at a time being kept in use) and tank water for drinking, cooking and washing up. The benefit of this concentration, of course, is that damage to the environment is minimised. What little there is localised where it can be relatively easily repaired and otherwise managed.

The track is so well defined and signposted that, assuming you don't depart from it, the navigation skills required are close to zero. Indeed, I don't recall consulting the map, let alone the compass. Assuming that you can

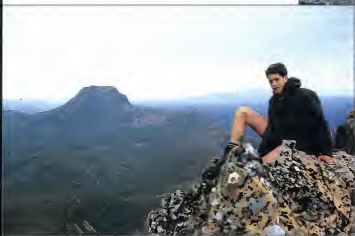
views in all directions. For a State high point, Mt Ossa is a uniquely worthwhile experience. Other summits require more exertion and/or experience to climb; some, such as Mt Ida, are particularly inaccessible. All can be difficult and serious undertakings in the bad weather so common in the region. And then there are numerous side tracks to waterfalls, lakes and lookouts marked along the way... Depending on weather, inclination and skill, the Overland Track experience can range from a relatively basic, no-frills

at the very summit of Mt Ossa—to the veritable 'inland sea' of Lake St Clair. In between are gems like the incomparably beautiful Lake Windermere.

Walking in the southern half of the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park—that is, south of Pelion Gap—is less interesting than that in the north. In particular, many walkers find the long walk round the shore of Lake St Clair not worth it. However, were the 'official' Overland Track re-routed through Pine Valley and then down the west side of



Above, 'the Strudel Sisters', aka Heike Reiner, left, and Annette Dillon, belt out their rendition of 'the Heide song' on the summit of Mt Oakleigh. **Left,** the view ahead; Chris Baxter atop Barn Bluff, with Cradle Mountain behind, in January 1964.




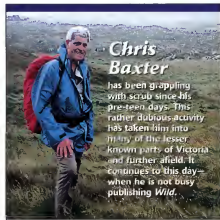
carry a pack and are of average fitness, the track is no physical challenge either. There are no hills or otherwise arduous terrain to get excited about. And with an all-sheltering hut to head for every five hours or so and plenty of fellow walkers along the way who might lend a hand in an emergency (including commercial groups whose leaders have access to satellite phones, and the occasional ranger—we found two in residence in huts) it's not exactly the last frontier. But the real appeal, and challenge, of walking in the region is in leaving the main track. There is a spectacular array of peaks along the entire length of the track, including above the popular sidetrack to Pine Valley. All these summits are worthwhile objectives, with rugged and rocky terrain that mostly entails some scrambling and with outstanding views. Some, such as Cradle Mountain, Barn Bluff, Mt Ossa and the Acropolis are very popular destinations and consequently have well-marked tracks leading from the main track to their summits. Our own ascent of Mt Ossa was a delight that far exceeded my expectations. The return trip from Pelion Gap is a superb and varied walk with breathtaking

through-trip to a demanding and highly rewarding multi-day expedition. And if you choose to go in winter, that's another matter altogether...

We were constantly charmed, delighted and surprised by the beauty, variety and spectacular nature of the flora and fauna we saw along the way on the main track alone, not to mention on side-trips. Despite strictly adhered to no-feeding rules, the huts appear to be meeting places for animals as well as humans. Wallabies and quolls abound and allow you to approach to within a metre or two. We were also lucky enough to see an seldom sighted southern brown bandicoot, and a beautiful spotted-tailed quoll. Of the vegetation, the most spectacular varieties include pandani, King Billy pines and cushion plants—all endemic to Tasmania, and abundant. We were too early to see the beech and fagus in the spectacular autumn mantle made famous in a hundred calendar photos. But that didn't matter. What you can see, in any season, is more than enough to fascinate even the most experienced naturalist.

Then there are the lakes for which the region is justly famous. They are the jewels in the crown, and range in size from tiny tarns just centimetres deep—such as the one

Mt Olympus, it would avoid this section and in the process add intrinsically interesting walking, making the Overland Track a more consistently excellent walking experience. Having said that, as it is, the Overland Track is truly one of the greatest walks in Australia. It is the sort of walk to which you can return, confident that, while the experience may vary slightly, the unique qualities of the region are being carefully protected and conserved and that, in the end, 'the Overland experience' is what you choose to make it. 



Chris Baxter

has been grappling with scrub since his pre-teen days. This rather dubious activity has taken him into many of the lesser-known parts of Victoria and further afield. It continues to this day—when he is not busy publishing *Wild*.

Connell's Cradle

Before the Overland Track—one family's contribution, by Nic Haygarth

FROM HIGHLAND HUNTER TO PARK ranger, from Weindorfer to the verge of the Wilderness World Heritage Area—for five decades Es Connell figured in the evolution of National Parks and bushwalking in Tasmania. In his retirement he could reflect on having seen the Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair National Park develop from a one-man operation into a destination for a quarter of a million visitors annually. His memories of the early days at Cradle Mountain, Lake St Clair and Freycinet were of places far removed from wilderness package tours and political battles such as that waged over the Lemonthyme Forest, although the experience of nature that has drawn visitors to the area for more than a century is fundamentally the same.

Esom Connell was born at Emba, a famously cold north-west Tasmanian farming com-

munity camps or worse: tending hundreds of snares spread over perhaps 20 or 30 kilometres; the hunter often had to doss down under a makeshift shelter of tree limbs and sheets of bark.

Es's father Lyle was a jack of all trades, a bush carpenter who had snared the Cradle region for years in seasonal rotation with farming. At Cradle he befriended Weindorfer, the charismatic Austrian-born farmer and amateur botanist whose desire to protect the

as Kitchen Hut and the Dove and Crater Lake boat-houses remain today, it is fitting that the ruins of an earlier Lyle Connell snaring hut can also be found near Lake Rodway.

In the 1930s the transition from hunter to ranger was a natural one, requiring only a small adjustment in thinking. Skilled bushmen who were expert King Billy pine carpenters were hard to come by and in the Great Depression the hunters needed work as much of their traditional hunting country

disappeared under the protected status of the Reserve. In 1931 the Overland Track, based on existing routes, was cut by a snarer, Bert Nichols, who later became the inaugural ranger in the southern reserve. Paddy Hartnett's Du Cane Hut, and other tracks remain today as the old bushmen's physical legacy.

Weindorfer's famous Waldheim was already inadequate for the tourist custom when the Connells took over. New rooms were added. The Connell-era Waldheim was easily distinguishable from the Weindorfer one by the conversion of the open sundeck (on the left-hand side) and front porch way into additional bedrooms. The new shingle walls kept extending to meet demand: the record figure for one night was 51 people. 'I can remember gettin' out of me bed many a time, giving it away', Es laughed. 'Oh, it was hard work up there, but it was a hell of a good time.'

Good times were also had on the Cradle Plateau ski field which Weindorfer had eagerly promoted. In the decade before the Second World War the enthusiasts of the Northern Tasmanian Alpine Club put in a fortnight every winter at Cradle.

One New Year's morning the Connells awoke to a belated white Christmas—45



Above, early Overland Track walkers Bill Perkins, left, and Max Playford arrive at the Connells' Windermere Hut in 1936. Perkins, left, the Connell family on the steps of Waldheim in the late 1930s. Es is seated.



munity, and grew up at nearby Barnington, where the family of eight grew potatoes and grains. In 1930, during the Great Depression, economic necessity forced him to become a hunter at the age of 13. He was introduced to Cradle Mountain and the bush life he would come to love at a time when the Reserve had not extended to include traditional hunting areas.

Snaring for native furs, long banned in Tasmania, sustained many rural families through the long winters. Even bush settlers like Gustav Weindorfer, the pioneer of Cradle Valley, snared for meat and for the cash he could gain from selling furs. For most it was a painstaking occupation requiring months in the snow belt, living in

Cradle Mountain highlands in a National Park has gained him iconic status as a conservationist. After Weindorfer's death a syndicate of his friends bought Waldheim Chalet and asked Lyle to act as caretaker. This began three decades of an almost con-

tinuous Connell presence within what would become the National Park. Lyle Connell was later appointed to be the northern Reserve's first ranger, his four sons (Es, Wal, Ross and Os) acting as honorary deputies while wife Maggie and their daughters Kitty and Audrey ran the chalet. While Connell handwork such

centimetres of snow at the Waldheim doorstep. Skis were donned in the porch as hosts and guests launched themselves down the curved front path and across the bridge over the creek, Weindorfer's sturdy pandani guarding this unexpected ski-run. On another occasion the drifts were so

'Es was builder, plumber, track-cutter and maintainer, log-clearer and, if necessary, rescue party as well.'

deep near Kitchen Hut that it served as a ski jump.

Cradle skiing is now only a memory, but another facet of its tourism has come full circle. As well as managing the chalet, building huts and cutting tracks, the Connells' local knowledge made them unrivalled guides in the late 1930s, as Victorian visitor Kevin Anderson reported: 'For a mile or more we accompanied Es and the pack-horse across the plateau, all the while learning all the mysteries of the plateau; its growths; its sweet smelling boronia, or lemontime lisd; the button grass; the grass trees; a slow-growing plant called, I think, the pin cushion, and hosts of other things.'

The Overland Track being much rougher than today and harder to

in for the bush, surprising grazing wallabies, pademelons and the car's suspension, as he dodged logs and tree-trunks before resuming the 'road'. His brother Es was at the wheel when almost a metre of snow stopped the Sheffield-Cradle Mountain Passenger Service at the then notorious Black Bog. 'I put the old man's Buick car into it, stopped in the middle of the road, and never got out of it for three weeks. We used to have to ski back down the road to get tucker.'

The greatest single challenge of the Connell era, however, was building New Pelion Hut (forerunner of the present Pelion Hut)

Board resumed the mountain chalet. Lyle took with him the King Billy pine he had assembled in anticipation of building a larger accommodation house, and built himself a retirement nest instead, but his sons Es and Wal, together with their wives Mildred and Joy, returned to the park as rangers and accommodation managers, respectively. Both couples had stints at Cradle Valley and Cynthia Bay, a unique double act which meant that they continued to develop the park's 'infrastructure'.

With a gravel road reaching its shores, Lake St Clair was already well patronised when Es took charge at Cynthia Bay in 1953, the Mt Rufus ski field proving a popular draw-card. Despite this, the tourist facilities had to be built virtually from scratch. Lake St Clair's 'Weindorfer', Bert 'Fergy' Fergusson, had been a relative late-comer, and all that remained of his tourist camp were a few tents and the ruins of his famous log and man-fern dining-room which had burned down years before. Another Fergy oddity stood just off the edge of the park west of Watersmeet: a big, wooden chimney occupied by a retired bank manager named Frank Cole. The temperamental Fergy was to have built a hut to go with it, but an argument with Cole changed his mind!

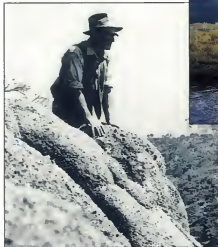
In those days the ranger did pretty much everything. Es was builder, plumber, track-cutter and maintainer, log-clearer and, if necessary, rescue party as well.

Es preferred the bone-shaking park approaches of yesteryear to today's bitumen. He was far from alone in believing that the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park in particular had been spoiled by too many people and too many efforts to attract them. The introduction of park fees was another form of 'progress' that rankled with him.

Ultimately, however, it was the solitude of the highlands that he reflected upon. 'It was the best time of your life', he remembered of his bush career. 'Being away on your own, no worries, no motor cars, no people.'



Above, the Connells' boathouse on Dove Lake was built in the 1930s. Cradle Mountain is in the background. Nic Haygarth. Left, original Freycinet ranger Es Connell on the Hazards in the 1970s.



follow (south of Pelion Gap you often needed a sixth sense to find the next stake marking the track). Wal and Es in particular acted as overnight tour guides, the former even taking parties the length of the park, with a packhorse bearing the provisions.

Until the late 1930s the walk sported only four fairly basic stopovers—Windermere, Pelion, Du Cane and Nichols Hut, near the top end of Lake St Clair. At the blizzard-prone northern end there was no shelter between Waldheim and Windermere, 18 kilometres into the park. Many streams were unbridged, fallen trees often blocked the track and, decades before duckboarding, the button-grass plains were insatiable bogs. Track degradation, a major headache today, was evident even then. Between Mt Pelion East and Kia Ora Creek the Overland Track resembled 'a log track, gettin' washed out—and only two or three parties went through in a year then'. Corduroying was the prescribed solution to bogs, a far more laborious task in those days without the benefit of the chain-saw or the helicopter which could drop equipment and supplies.

In fact, Bob Quail's Cradle Valley horse and wagonette service was just beginning to give way to the motor car. Whereas Cradle is now barely an hour from the Bass Strait ferry, early in the Connell era getting there remained a battle. The track between Waldheim and Sheffield was so bad that driver Os Connell would periodically desert

to complement Old Pelion, the mining hut which still stands today near the middle of the park. It is no exaggeration to say that flying transport could have averted a life-and-death situation on this occasion, the job taking six men some months to finish. After King Billy pine had been dragged down from Mt Ossa and a frame erected, the builders found themselves imprisoned in Old Pelion Hut, facing starvation. Snowed in for three or four weeks on a daily ration of a handful of oats and some trout caught in the adjacent stream, Es even tried plucking a native hen for additional tucker. Finally, a westerly blow cleared the way, enabling them to beat the path home, but the snow hadn't finished with its emaciated victims. 'We had to crawl round Cradle, round the Fury Gorge', Es recalled. 'You couldn't walk. Everything was covered in snow. It was crusty, and you'd get up and walk a few yards and then you'd go through a bush out of sight. We crawled round there, and I was a bit crooked on the old man, he had a flask of rum. He wouldn't let us have a drink. We got to the Kitchen and then he produced it.'

Lyle Connell's need was probably greater than his sons. He was bringing home a hernia that hastened the end of his working life. His business (he had bought Waldheim) was soon under threat anyway. In 1947 the Connell family's reign at Waldheim came to a bitter end when the Scenery Preservation

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Cradle Mountain—Lake St Clair National Park

One-, two- and three-day ventures into the northern end of Tasmania's most popular alpine park, by Kylie Bevan

BEST KNOWN FOR THE FIVE- TO seven-day Overland Track which links Cradle Mountain to Lake St Clair in Tasmania's north-west, there are also many shorter tracks worth exploration in this spectacular National Park. An extensive track system has evolved to protect the fragile alpine environment, ensuring options for most weather conditions, all seasons and any level of challenge.

Cradle Mountain—Lake St Clair National Park, a World Heritage Area, is a stunningly beautiful region encompassing jagged dolerite peaks, deep glacial lakes, ancient pine forests, alpine moorlands, and flora and fauna endemic to Tasmania. Even from the car park at Dove Lake there are inspiring views which continue to thrill with further exploration.

Although not one of the first Europeans to explore the area, Austrian-born Gustav Weindorfer worked tirelessly to gain recognition for its value as a National Park, having stated from the top of Cradle Mountain in 1910 with arms outstretched to encompass the view, 'This must be a National Park for the people for all time. It is magnificent, and people must know about it and enjoy it.' His vision was realised in 1922, when the area became a Scenic Reserve and Wildlife Sanctuary. In 1971 it became Cradle Mountain—Lake St Clair National Park, and in 1982 was listed as a World Heritage Area, satisfying seven of the 11 natural, cultural and cultural landscape elements, the highest worldwide at that time. Weindorfer was correct—more than 250 000 people now flock to the park every year to enjoy its magnificence.

When to go

Most walkers visit the park from late spring to early autumn when the weather is generally more stable and hospitable; however, there are opportunities to explore the park year round.

In late spring plants celebrate the coming of warmer, more settled weather with abundant flowers and fruits. Pandani, button grass, gentians and cushion plants burst with colour, followed by tea-tree, bauera, mountain rocket, strawberry pine, lemon-scented boronia, daisy bush and scoparia in January and February.



The breathtaking winter outlook from Cradle Cirque. Kylie Bevan

Summer is the busiest time at Cradle Mountain, with greater possibility of clear azure skies and warm weather. However, be prepared for sudden changes as the weather is notoriously fickle no matter what time of the year.

Autumn heralds the 'turning of the fagus', when the leaves of the only deciduous tree native to Tasmania, *Nothofagus gunnii*, change from green to yellow to golden to rust, before dropping to the ground in preparation for a snow-laden winter. In late April walks around Crater Lake, Twisted Lakes and along the Face Track provide views of this colourful display. While early autumn is often relatively stable, late autumn heralds mist, fog and cloud, so be prepared for changeable weather and wild storms.

During winter, many tracks are covered with snow and additional dangers such as avalanches exist (as detailed by Monica Chapman in *Wild* no 81). Parties experienced in winter conditions may enjoy the additional challenge. Indeed, the beauty of dark mountain peaks edged with snow, frozen tams with intricate patterns in the ice, and

button-grass fields tipped with frost can be a photographer's delight. Few will wish to attempt summits during winter, with the higher-altitude walks possible only when snow levels are accommodating. Snowshoes may be useful on gradual gradients, but are a hindrance on the steep slopes. A seemingly easy circuit of Dove Lake in summer can become a challenging day-long hike after heavy snow. Not all tracks are marked with poles or markers, so if pads are concealed by snow, carry a map, thorough track notes and a compass, and get advice from park staff before departure.

Safety

Be prepared for all weather conditions no matter what the season. Snowstorms are not uncommon—and have claimed lives—even in midsummer. Weather reports are displayed at the Information Centre so that you may plan accordingly.

Mountain peaks such as Cradle Mountain and Barn Bluff entail some boulder hopping and crossing of scree slopes. En-

sure that care is taken, and do not attempt these in wet or icy conditions.

A tent must be carried even if you intend to use the huts at Waterfall Valley or Lake Rodway/Scott-Kilvert as weather conditions may deteriorate requiring a change of plans, or the huts may be full on arrival. Overnight stays are permitted only at Waterfall Valley and Lake Rodway within the designated Day Use Area.

Fuel stoves must be used in the World Heritage Area as fires are prohibited. Flowing water in Tasmania is generally fine for drinking although this is a high-use area—if in doubt, boil the water. The creek near Kitchen Hut is possibly contaminated. Tank water is usually available at Waterfall Valley Hut and Scott-Kilvert Hut.

Trip-intention books are provided at the Information Centre, Waldheim, and the Ronny Creek and Dove Lake car parks. Please complete your details on the understanding that a search will only be conducted if you are reported missing. Leave plans and intended return dates with a family member or friend.

Access

Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair National Park is 85 kilometres by road from Devonport, by Wilmot or Sheffield. Parking is available within the park. Alternatively, TassieLink operates daily bus services during the peak season, and limited services year round. Maxwell's Coaches link the Cradle Valley camping ground with the Lodge, Information Centre, Ronny Creek and Dove Lake.

Maps

The best map for the short walks in the Cradle Mountain region is Tasmap 1:20 000 *Cradle Mountain Day Walk Map and Notes*, designed specifically for bushwalkers, with tracks, huts, camping areas and interesting features marked. A 1:25 000 topographical *Cradle* map is also available. Barn Bluff and Waterfall Valley are off the edge of the Tasmap 1:20 000, but included on Tasmap 1:100 000 *Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair National Park* map.

Further Reading

Extra information can be obtained from *Cradle Mountain, Lake St Clair and Walls of Jerusalem National Parks* by John Chapman and John Siseman, *120 Walks in Tasmania* by Tyrone Thomas and *Bushwalking in Australia* by Lonely Planet. Flora enthusiasts will gain from *A Guide to Flowers and Plants of Tasmania* by Launceston Field Naturalists Club and *Alpine Tasmania* by Jamie Kirkpatrick.

The Walks

Two days: Crater Lake–Cradle Mountain–Lake Rodway circuit

Starting at Ronny Creek, take the Overland Track along the boardwalk across a button-grass plain to a bridge crossing Ronny Creek. Take the track to the right, then pass

the signposted Horse Track to the right and climb through a lush pandani, myrtle and sassafras forest to Crater Falls, and on to Crater Lake. Deeply carved by glacial movement, the lake often provides perfect reflections of the surrounding 200 metre cliffs, particularly beautiful when tinged by golden fagus leaves during autumn. Continue the climb to Marions Lookout for spectacular views of Cradle Mountain and Dove Lake. Should the weather be particularly inclement at this stage, consider returning to lower altitudes, as the next stage across the plateau is bleak and exposed in poor weather.

Passing the junction where the Horse Track—an alternate and less steep option from Ronny Creek—again meets the track from the right, Kitchen Hut is reached approximately two to two-and-a-half hours from the start. For emergency use only, this hut offers a sheltered lunch spot.

the walks AT A GLANCE

Grade	Easy–medium
Length	Series of one- to three-day walks
Type	Mountain scenery, subalpine forest, alpine heathlands
Region	Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair National Park
Nearest town	Sheffield
Start/finish	Ronny Creek car park, north of Cradle Mountain
Best time	Late spring to early autumn. Winter for experienced walkers only

Special points

Accommodation in bush huts and camp-sites included in your park pass, available for day, fortnight and annual use throughout all Tasmanian parks. Alternatively, fees apply at the well-appointed cabins at Waldheim (phone 031 6492 1110) and the camping ground in Cradle Valley (ph 031 6492 1395). Cradle Mountain Lodge and commercial cabins just north of the park are more luxurious options.

Drop your pack here to climb Cradle Mountain. As the return trip takes about one-and-a-half to two hours, prepare for weather changes and injury. Carry water in dry weather as the small soak part-way up may be dry. Follow the Overland Track for 100 metres from Kitchen Hut, turn left, and almost immediately right. The track is well worn to the scree slopes below Smithies Peak, then marked by red paint as you boulder hop south to the summit. The brass plaque and cairn on the summit were designed by

Weindorfer to commemorate the first European ascent of Cradle Mountain by Henry Hellyer in 1831 although erected after Weindorfer's death. On a clear day your view will encompass nearby Barn Bluff and Fury Gorge, and to the south Mts Oakleigh, Pelion East, Pelion West and Ossa, Tasmania's highest mountain at 1617 metres. Return by the same route.

Collect your pack at Kitchen Hut and continue along the Overland Track at the base of the dolerite cliffs of Cradle Mountain and Benson Peak. Turn left along the Lake Rodway track, descending steeply to Scott-Kilvert Memorial Hut by the lake. Camp here for the night as once past this point,



camping is permitted only in an emergency.

On day two, continue by Flynns Tarn to tiny Artists Pool, rimmed by perfect pencil pines. Next, the emergency shelter below Little Horn is reached and a right turn must be taken toward Hansons Peak. At the turn-off 300 metres further along, turn right to the Twisted Lakes, a series of picturesque tarns reflecting pencil pines and deciduous beech. At this point you may choose to retrace your steps for ten minutes to the main track, and climb across Hansons Peak. This entails a short, steep, chained descent on the far side, and gives excellent views of Dove Lake and Lake Lilla. Alternatively, continue past the Twisted Lakes to Lake Hanson, a sometimes muddy but particularly beautiful section of track, especially in autumn. You'll rejoin the main track north of Hansons Peak.

The Lake Rodway track continues down to the edge of Dove Lake, by Glacier Rock to the Dove Lake car park. From here it is a further half hour or so by Lake Lilla along the Dove Lake track to the Ronny Creek bridge and back to the car park, avoiding a boring, albeit shorter, trudge along the road.

Fit parties could complete this walk in one long summer day.



The side trip to Barn Bluff summit takes two to three hours. Whether climbing in the afternoon of day one or in the morning of day two, drop your pack at the junction and carry essentials. Follow the cirque rim for 1.5 kilometres, and then up the scree slopes, taking care to note the route across the dolerite boulders, where caims conflict. Again providing expansive views in all directions, it is the azure blue Lake Will almost immediately below the precipitous summit cliffs that draws attention. Return by the same route.

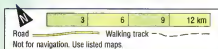
Camp, or use the hut, at Waterfall Valley, a sheltered nook below Barn Bluff, 1.5 kilometres from the cirque junction down a well-maintained track. Small cascades a little further along the track to Lake Windermere, on the left, provide a stimulating shower for the keen ones. Use only existing tracks and consider your impact along the easily eroded creek edges.

On day two, return to Cradle Cirque junction, take the side-trip to Barn Bluff, and retrace your steps on the Overland Track to the north, taking a right turn to the Lake Rodway track at the foot of Benson Peak. Camp, or use the hut, at Scott-Kilvert.

Day three follows the same route as the above two-day circuit, by Artists Pool, Hansons Peak or Twisted Lakes, Dove Lake and Lake Lilla.

Fit parties could complete this walk in two long summer days; however, why rush it?

The Overland Track



Three days; Cradle Mountain- Barn Bluff circuit

Similar to the above circuit, with an additional night to spend at Waterfall Valley Hut and camp-site, allowing time to climb Barn Bluff on day two.

Follow the Overland Track to Marions Lookout and Kitchen Hut, and climb Cradle Mountain on day one, weather permitting. Continue along the Overland Track to the

One day; Lake Lilla-Marions Lookout-Kitchen Hut-Lake Wilks-Dove Lake circuit

Starting from Dove Lake car park, follow the track to serene Lake Lilla, and on to Wombat Pool perched on the hillside. The climb continues steadily past the turn-off to Crater Lake, where a detour is worth while if it is to be missed on other days. Continue up to Marions Lookout and to Kitchen Hut, in the shadow of the dolerite cliffs of Cradle Mountain. Turning left along the Face Track, follow the base of Weindorfers Tower to the Lake Wilks turn-off. Descend steeply to this pristine glacial lake, and further to the shore of Dove Lake. While it is shorter to return to the car park on the westerly side of Dove Lake, turning right instead will guide you past the Honeymoon Islands into a lovely section of rainforest and Glacier Rock.

Fit and enthusiastic walkers could include a side-trip to the summit of Cradle Mountain if weather permits, or to Suttons Tarn by following the track on the right immediately after Kitchen Hut.

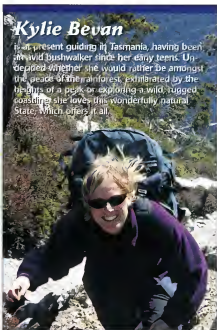
Part-day options

The Dove Lake circuit and Dove Canyon Track are excellent choices for low visibility or inclement days and are also worth the time on fine days. The Hounslow Heath–Maryland Track circuit is particularly beautiful during wild-flower season. Also starting at Waldheim, Weindorfers Forest Walk is a short, one kilometre circuit where moss and lichen blanket the trunks of King Billy pines, celery-top pines and myrtle beech. The Pencil Pine Creek Falls track is a very short but worthwhile jaunt from the Information Centre.

Essentially, walking options abound in Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park and only your imagination will limit your experience. Only tracked walks are mentioned above to avoid an increase in damaging footsteps; however, there are also ample opportunities to explore off-track. Get advice about the more sensitive areas from National Park staff. 📍

Kylie Bevan

is at present guiding in Tasmania, having been a wild bushwalker since her early teens. Un-decided whether she would rather be amongst the peace of the rainforest, exhilarated by the heights of a peak or exploring a wild, rugged coastline, she loves this wonderfully natural State which offers it all.





*The twin 'horns' of the Yekung
loom over walkers on Mt Howitt.*
All uncredited photos Andrew Bain



CLASSIC VICTORIAN ALPINE CIRCUIT

The **RAZOR** and the **VIKING**

Andrew Bain explores the area and its apocalyptic names

THE SUMMIT OF MT HOWITT IS REGULARLY touted as Victoria's finest lookout but the area's early explorers were clearly not among its admirers. Instead of grand, adorning names, they branded the immediate country with contemptible titles—the Terrible Hollow, the Devils Staircase,

Mt Despair, Horrible Gap, Hells Window and Mt Buggery.

Less apocalyptic in name, though not without their own startling imagery, are the nearby Razor and Viking. These two peaks are not the highest or most famous in the area but seen from Mt Howitt

they are the most striking—two sharpened tips rising from the deep pit of the Terrible Hollow. From atop Mt Howitt they are an invitation to linger and explore, upraised fingers that beckon walkers across the famed Crosscut Saw and beyond, around one of the classic circuit routes of the Victorian Alps.

The circuit's popular start is also its easiest, with the Howitt Plains car park luxuriously high at 1600 metres. A wide plateau ridge leads straight and north from the car park, a virtual driveway into the heart of the High Country.

Across the ridge's top, on a fast-warming morning, we set out following the thread of

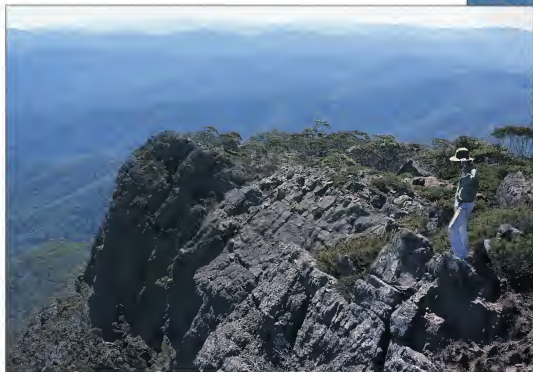
From this grandest of alpine grandstands almost all of Victoria's mountains of note are on display, with the Razor and the Viking prominent and the bulk of Mt Buffalo beyond. In the opposite direction is the imposing lump of Mt Magdala, with the King Billies and Mt Clear deeper in the distance. Turning further, the balding, scarred scalp of Mt Buller takes prime position and, beside it, Mt Stirling. Turn again and the silhouetted escarpment of Mt Cobbler prevails. Mountain after mountain recedes into the distance, their ocean-blue colouring matched by their wave-like appearance.

At the forefront of the scene is the Crosscut Saw, humped like a herd of camels.

how I would feel after the long traverse along the ridge: Mt Buggery.

Highway-wide at its juncture with Mt Howitt, the Crosscut Saw takes little time to narrow and soon we are walking along its knobby top. On one side the Crosscut Saw plunges into the Terrible Hollow, the headwaters of the Wonnangatta River, and on

'Mountain after mountain recedes into the distance, their ocean-blue colouring matched by their wave-like appearance.'



The Viking's summit is guarded by these formidable cliffs. Chris Baxter

the Mt Howitt walking track through a mess of wiry, stunted snow gums and a freckling of snow plains towards its eponymous peak. The few clearings give glimpses of a distant, feathertop-rippled horizon and, closer, the south-eastern flank of Mt Howitt clinging to its final, resilient snow packs of the season.

After an hour of walking the plateau ends, tumbling into the Terrible Hollow in a precipitous, stepped spur—the Devils Staircase. Here, the track swings west along a narrower ridge, beginning the gradual climb to Mt Howitt.

Had the area's explorers persisted with their thematic names they might have preferred to call this vertebral ridge with its relentless climbs and descents the Devils Backbone.

A sharp-edged ridge with knolls and mountain tops as the teeth in the metaphoric saw, the Crosscut Saw joins Mt Howitt to Mt Speculation and is, along with the Razorback to its north, the classic ridge walk of Victoria's High Country. Around a dozen different peaks rise from its sharp crest, but only one has a name and it is an apt description of

the other it drops almost as steeply into the Howqua valley. At times we can see the two valley floors at once.

'It's hump to hump, isn't it?' another walker complains, throwing down his pack, as we sit resting in one of the Saw's depressions. With Mts Buggery and Speculation to come, the Crosscut Saw's worst is still ahead. But this walker won't see it, at least not this day. He has taken the more difficult approach to the Crosscut Saw, climbing to it from the Howqua valley, adding 800 metres of ascent to his day. Now the extra climb is telling. A few hundred metres along the track we find him stopped again, slumped against a rock like a broken animal.

'This is it', he says. 'Camp.'

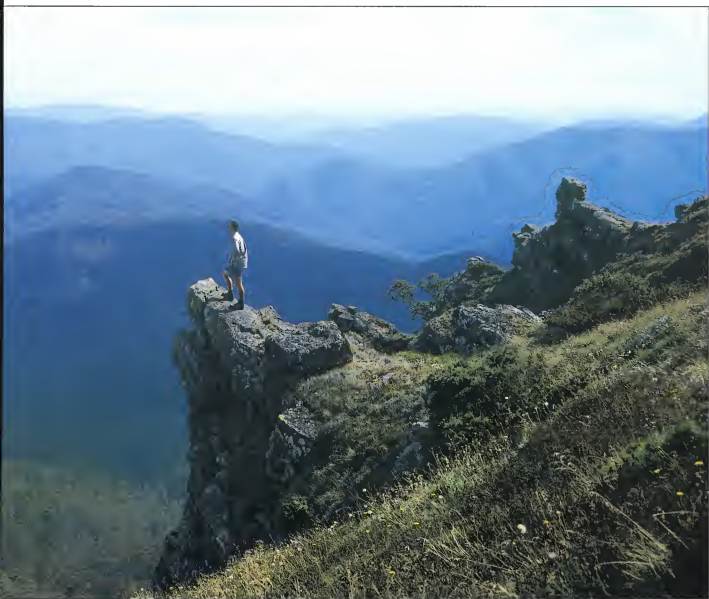
We press on towards Mt Buggery, the penultimate tooth on the Crosscut Saw, the snow gums getting flashier as we climb, the wattle balling in yellow flower beside the track. From the round, treed summit of Mt Buggery follows a steep 200 metre, knee-bracing descent into Horrible Gap, the deep

Gap, with knees throbbing and body chilling I find myself empathising with those early explorers.

As the track climbs from Horrible Gap towards the flat summit ridge of Mt Speculation it does so with a crest-hugging single-mindedness, not deviating from the middle line of the ridge. Its straight course takes it

like minutes, rolling, rolling, rolling across the sky. Wind gusts storm through the trees, coming in audible charges before slamming into the tent. Rain taps a steady beat on the fly.

By morning virtual white-out conditions prevail atop Mt Speculation, with cloud engulfing us and the snow gums skeletal and vaguely threatening. We share the summit



The author gazes from the Crosscut Saw into the depths of the Howqua valley.

notch that separates Mt Buggery from Mt Speculation.

As we drop into the gap, my toes mashing into cottage cheese in the front of my boots, our tiring thoughts turn to the origins of the area's baleful names. Such ugly titles to describe such beauty.

'Perhaps they kept saying, "My legs are scratched to buggery"?' my walking partner, Janette, suggests, her bare legs going white to welt-red as we push through the thick, scratchy scrub clinging to Mt Buggery's flank.

At Horrible Gap rather fittingly it starts to rain, marring a day of sunshine. The distant waves of mountains turn the stormy grey of an angry ocean. Here, finally, in Horrible

Gap through two bluffs with two corresponding scrambles. The first scramble is a single heave on to a ledge, the smoothened rock containing fingertip holds that might be considered glorious to a climber but to us are like pits in glass. The second scramble, bless it, is a stepladder by any measure.

We push on, making camp atop Mt Speculation though I can't deny that I am more Bugged than Speculative. The clouds clear as dusk settles around us and the nearby lights of Mt Buller beam like glow-worms.

But the absence of cloud is temporary. In the night they return in numbers, rampaging overhead as a violent mob, the sound of thunder trailing behind itself for what seems

with one other walker and together we set out through the flour-thick fog, heading along Mt Speculation's north-east ridge as it begins its slow descent into the Catherine valley. This day's walk across to Viking Saddle presents the circuit's greatest navigational difficulties—its crux, if you like—and yet we can see little further than the next tree. It doesn't bode well.

As the ridge narrows and straightens north like a compass needle, the track slips almost unperceived off the crest, then plunges down the ridge's flank with such haste as to make the descent into Horrible Gap seem, in hindsight, dance-floor flat. We drop out of the snow-gum cover into a bar code of

alpine-ash trunks, the fog suddenly above us as we bottom out at an old four-wheel drive track which we follow to Catherine Saddle.

The sun punches through the cloud at Catherine Saddle even as the mountains around it still disappear into cloud. The day suddenly promises better things although no relief is offered from the forbidding appellations that filled our first day. Mt Buggy and the Horrible Gap might be behind us but Mt Despair is our next target.

past walkers confronted by the very problem we now face. Where do we go?

In truth it is a lottery. We explore one route and rely on instinct or a well-hidden and now infrequent track marker for guidance. In true Razor style we wander half-lost, half-found for around an hour before emerging at the red-rock clearing on the shoulder of the Razor. We have negotiated the maze.

A quick scamper towards the summit of the Razor brings the High Country back

smooth band of escarpment caps the ridge we've just blundered across. In the Catherine valley below, spurs intertwine like fingers. And ahead, demanding most attention, is the escarpment fringe of the Viking, a furrowed brow of rock. It would appear impenetrable were it not split by a single gully which is the only evident weakness in its defensive wall. This, I hope, is the way through.

Viking Saddle and camp are now near to hand, one last knoll rudely separating us from dinner and bed. The Viking looms ever larger as we march on, until it seems to tower almost vertically from the saddle. We will have a 350 metre climb to welcome us to the new day. We will also have snow.

With little regard to the season and the height (Viking Saddle is below 1200 metres) the snow begins to fall just before dawn. In the saddle it melts on impact but grows heavier and more durable as we make the steady climb towards the Viking's summit.

For the first time, despite all the circuit's lumps and bumps, it feels that we are climbing a mountain and I start to think that this is the finest section of the circuit. The track

'...I can't deny that I am more Bugged than Speculative.'

It is with little despair, however, that we make the simple climb to its viewless summit along a faint sliver of track which becomes only fainter as it crosses to the mountain's far side. Scrub is piled high around and over the track. Stepping through it becomes a question of faith in the path's unseen course, especially for Janette, the shortest member of our trio, her vision obscured by the scrub that envelopes her.

'I need toe-cam', she suggests. At times we can only see her by watching for the moving vegetation.

A short sidetrack reveals a fine view of the afternoon ahead—the ramp-like summit of the Razor and the initially confronting sight of the ridge connecting it to Mt Despair.

Listing in sympathy with the Razor, the ridge is a steeply sloping sheet of sandstone. We stand puzzled, trying to imagine a walkers' line across this rock slab. We'd thought our problems would be with navigation, not terrain.

Relief comes with the discovery that the route threads along the bottom of the sandstone sheet in the surprisingly damp forest. Nonetheless it is this short section that out-smarts so many bushwalkers. You rarely meet a walker who can boast of getting from Mt Despair to the Razor (or vice versa) without taking at least one wrong turn. Talk to enough people and it comes to sound like a hedge maze in a fun park.

Being inside the Razor-Viking Wilderness Zone the track is not maintained and, at least according to anecdote and National Park policy, track markers are non-existent. But in reality and to our pleasant surprise there is no better-marked piece of track along the circuit. Orange triangles and yellow Alpine Track signs are like breadcrumbs through the forest.

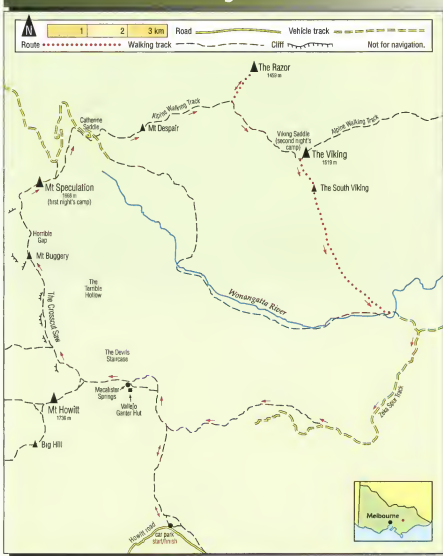
The trick to the early crossing is to keep to the faint track along the base of the rock sheet. If you can touch the rock's moss cushion with your left hand you're almost certainly on the correct path.

Our difficulties begin at about the point where gullies begin to furrow the ridge. Suddenly there is no guiding rock at hand and the track frays into a virtual firework of paths, an explosion of sidetracks created by

into view in a scene that rivals that from atop Mt Howitt. The Crosscut Saw has popped into view from beneath its morning cloud, with the Devils Staircase stepping down into the Wonnangatta valley.

Near to hand the Razor itself looms like the prow of a sinking ship and a narrow,

The Razor and the Viking



switchbacks high to the base of the escarpment, where it swings south-west, sidling along the Grampians-like rock past a wonderful, mossy soak before funnelling up the hoped-for gully towards the summit.

To ensure that we locate the correct spur our plan is to follow the southerly ridge only briefly from the South Viking summit, then turn immediately downhill, dropping around 100 metres. Turning right once more

Along this track, following again the rim of the Terrible Hollow, the scrub closes around us like an incoming tide, our legs disappearing once more into groping bush. Toe-cam re-enters the conversation as we near the



Janette Bain on the Crosscut Saw under the distant gaze of Mts Stirling (far left) and Cobbler (far right).

From here we watch clouds pregnant with snow lumber through the Terrible Hollow. Across the Terrible Hollow, Mt Howitt and the Crosscut Saw are being slowly painted white. But it is a day that doesn't know what it wants to be. Above us now, perfect blue sky reigns while snow falls only metres away.

For most of the past two days we have been following the course of the Alpine Walking Track but on the summit of the Viking we go our separate ways. The long-distance track turns north-east, dropping towards Barry Saddle, whereas our next goal is more evident—the South Viking, a second summit reached from the main peak across a series of rock ribs.

The descent from the South Viking presents another navigational puzzle. The spur we want to follow, which descends to the Wonnangatta River, heads first south from the summit then south-east, but many walkers have unknowingly veered on to a different line at the point not far from the summit where the spur splinters into two. On the mistaken route—a second spur—the going is good for a couple of kilometres but then it's a precipitous tangle into the valley.

and paralleling the ridge on which we began, we rise on to an extremely steep spur where, sure enough, there is the faintest etching of a track. This track is not marked on maps but it quickly becomes a clear, well-trodden route on the crest of the spur.

The snow turns to rain at around 1100 metres as we quickly descend to the Wonnangatta River, now at the edge of the Terrible Hollow. Of all the sad-sack names in the area this one appears to be the most considered, suggesting somebody with prophetic knowledge about the blackberries—one of the great 'terribles' of the Australian bush—that would one day choke the valley. From camp I try exploring downstream and return gouged and splintered by thorns and calling the valley far worse things than terrible.

The final day is a pragmatic day, not a scenic one, requiring a climb of 1000 metres along the dusty Zeka Spur four-wheel-drive track and the heavily overgrown connecting track back to the Mt Howitt walking track.

The intrigued stares of passing four-wheel drivers make us feel like fauna as dust-coated we shuffle on, willing forward the junction that will return us to a foot track.

car park and the circuit's end, as does the word 'terrible' as the thick scrub rakes cruelly across our bare legs.

But, in truth, this is a land of misnomers. The only real terrible, the only despair, I think as we return to the car park, is to leave. ●

Andrew Bain

is a Melbourne writer who spends too much time wandering when he should be working. He is the author of a book, *Headwinds*, to be published in October, about a 20 000 kilometre cycling journey around Australia.



WALKING IN THE AUSTRALIAN ALPS

JAGUNGAL JOUR

A sojourn in the Snowy Mountains, by Marcus Gellert



At the end of their first day, the party was glad to see Whites River Hut nestled among snow gums.

All uncredited photos Marcus Gellert

IT HAD BEEN MORE THAN FIVE YEARS since my last multiday hike. The urge was growing and I decided that Mt Jagungal in the Kosciuszko National Park would be my new challenge. (I ended up basing my walk on 'The Kerries' track notes in the *Classic New South Wales Walks WildGUIDE*.) My brother Shane and our friend Gary formed the trio who set out on this five-day quest.

After an early start in Jindabyne, we drove to Guthega power station, where our trip would begin. The weather was perfect for walking, with a cool breeze and clear skies. However, the forecast for days two and three were for much colder conditions and more December snow.

Spirits were high as we snapped the obligatory 'before' photos and then proceeded

northwards from the power station. As the designated leader, and the only one with any real bushwalking experience, I took the lead as we climbed quickly from the valley. Less than an hour later I was bringing up the rear with blisters already forming.

I had decided that this walk would begin a new era with my boots. My trusty Blundstone boots had taken me across Tasmania and Victoria and I was already regretting my needless disdain of the old faithfuls. By the time we reached Disappointment Spur Hut my feet were in need of a rest. I tightened my bootlaces and made a pledge that I'd get through the day without whinging or taking my boots off for a look.

After another couple of hours' walking, we rounded a bend and had a beautiful view

of the shining Whites River Hut nestled in the valley below. There were two fords to cross to reach the hut—the first water crossings we had encountered. Putting blisters to the back of my mind, I pulled out my leadership hat and, without dropping pace, walked straight through the barely ankle-deep water. Gary obviously felt that my experience meant very little, so he walked upstream for a better crossing. Only he knows whether he actually found it, because he returned a little wetter than when he'd left! At lunch, Gary removed all but one item of his clothing and left them to dry in the sun. As he lay sun-baking, a group of about 20 students came along. After a mad rush the slightly drier clothes were back on and we decided to vacate the area immediately.

NEY



'We collapsed on the ground, only 300 metres from our destination, feeling sorry for ourselves.'

After a short phone call to my wife (in Victoria), we took a more direct route down to Schlink Pass and walked our final leg of the day to Schlink Hut (aka the Schlink Hilton). We set up our two tents next to the stream but did our cooking in the hut.

The first night's sleep is never the easiest, so we had an early start the next morning. Snow was forecast for some time in the afternoon and the darkening clouds blowing quickly overhead gave us little reason to doubt that information. For this reason, we made quick time and reached Valentine Hut to the north by about ten am. We were prepared to spend the night there but the weather seemed to be stabilising and we decided to push on to Grey Mare Hut. It looked easy on the map and an early afternoon end seemed likely. Our calculations were soon in doubt as we proceeded down a steep track to Valentine Falls. Our 30-minute estimate turned into an hour as we bush bashed down a trackless and rocky slope. We somehow bypassed the waterfall and eventually ended up well below it in a boulder-strewn section of the Valentine Creek. Looking above us, we watched the cascading water and assumed it was the falls we had sought. We later discovered that the falls were much higher and more impressive. We made a nervous crossing over the water-pounded boulders and sat down. We were exhausted after our difficult journey along the creek and we could find no sign of a track.

that we were in wilderness now and the beauty couldn't go unnoticed.

Later in the afternoon we managed to stumble on the Grey Mare Fire Track, and we were ecstatic when we caught sight of Grey Mare Hut on the edge of the tree line above us. As we'd been walking without a track most of the day, we left the track and took a direct route to the hut. The hut was close and our enthusiasm to reach it was strong, but we were sapped of energy and our muscles ached. Finally I declared; 'I cannot make it up that hill! We collapsed on the ground, only 300 metres from our destination, feeling sorry for ourselves and wondering how we could go any further the next day.'

It was a relief to stagger into the hut. It had been a much tougher day than we'd expected and we needed something to bolster our spirits for the three days ahead. Our answer was to stand under the freezing water that fell from an old rusted pipe behind the hut. It was a remnant of a former gold-mine and there were many other exhibits that told of its past scattered around our open-air bathroom.

We slept much better that night on our cosy bunks. I dreamt of my lonely wife and two boys, Shane of his new car somewhere on the production line, and Gary of the coming reunion with his girlfriend in London.

We woke next morning to a fine and sunny day. Our spirits were raised after our night's sleep and a hearty breakfast of porridge and



Mission accomplished; 'the boys' frown intently at the camera on the summit of Mt Jagungal. The author is on the right.

Fortunately, after a few spots of rain, the weather began to clear—the forecast snow never arrived. We were glad because we were finding it tough going. We had to travel a few kilometres without a track, so we were constantly referring to the map. The valleys through which we were travelling were steep and traversing the slope put constant pressure on our knees and ankles. However, we could occasionally snap out of our melancholy to admire the views around us. We truly felt

condensed milk. The short day's walk was rather uneventful—which suited us just fine. We travelled along the Grey Mare Fire Track through some open plains and dry swamps before turning east towards Mt Jagungal. By early afternoon we had made camp beside a small creek surrounded by a beautiful display of wild flowers. Mt Jagungal stood imposingly above us. The summit tempted us yet the route we were to take looked steep and unrelenting.

A few of the slower walkers from the large group were at the same water crossing that had tested us earlier. They were sitting down, putting their socks and boots back on. After a knowing glance between our trio we walked directly through the water without breaking stride. Gary had learned his lesson!

We made our way to Schlink Pass, where we decided to make the most of the great weather and bag our first peak—Dickie Cooper Bogong. We dumped our packs in a small group of trees while I got out my *WildGUIDE* to check on the best route to the summit. It was then that I discovered that I'd lost the guide! [*Perish the thought!* Managing Editor] We spent 20 minutes in a futile search before continuing with the true basics—a map and compass. We immediately got map practice as we took a roundabout route to the summit of Dickie Cooper Bogong. The views from the top were stunning with Mt Kosciuszko to the south and, to the north, Mt Jagungal.

We spent the afternoon relaxing in the sunshine and had our meal as we watched the setting sun colour 'our' mountain with a stunning orange glow. The mountain air began to cool, and it was off to the warmth of our sleeping-bags for another night.

Our tents were covered in white frost the next morning but the sky was cloudless and promised a perfect day. We were excited about the summit and it didn't take us long to pack up and hit our trackless 'path' towards Mt Jagungal's rocky summit.

It was a steep climb from the very beginning. We travelled through a lightly timbered forest and on to a treeless ridge. After passing the blister pain barrier, we made relatively quick work of our 200 metre climb. All that stood before us now was the summit of Mt Jagungal 200 metres above.

Two obvious natural ramps led towards the top and our opinions differed as we discussed the best route. We decided that I

the end. To my amazement, the rules were tossed aside as Shane and Gary left their ramp and crossed over on to mine with a clear lead. Being a stickler for rules, I was not impressed and would have told them so if they had been closer. I remained silent and instead resolved to push on even harder and see whether I could miraculously catch them. After another ten minutes I had gained considerable ground but it appeared that the summit was too close for any heroics that day. Gary turned around and yelled down to me: 'You can be the Americans, and we'll be the Aussies!' recalling our America's Cup triumph. He gave a big smile and then disappeared behind some rocks as they set off to the summit only metres above them.

More than a little disappointed at being outdone, I plodded ahead to join the others. Within a few minutes, I rounded a large rock and there was the summit marker just above me. After months of planning, I had

you Aussies doin' down there?'. The tables had turned!

After the obligatory photos proving our 'conquest', we sat down to admire the views from one of Australia's highest mountains. Those to the south, with the snow atop Mt Kosciuszko, were particularly stunning. We spent a long time just sitting there soaking up the wilderness before us.

It was still well before noon; so we reluctantly decided it was time to leave the summit to the mass of ravens that had welcomed us into their territory. There were no tracks to follow for the next 20 kilometres, so we'd been studying the maps to see our route from our perfect vantage point. On a last-minute impulse I double-checked our course with the compass and discovered that we were about to head down the wrong valley!

We descended from the summit very quickly, and had our lunch soon after under the shade of a small grove of snow gums.



A study in sky and alpine grasses; on the Kerries. Chris Baxter

would go it alone up the steeper but shorter and more direct ramp, while Shane and Gary would try to outdo me along the novice ramp.

Once again the going was tough but our fitness and strength seemed to gain a new level so close to our prize. Shane and Gary spurred one another on as they took the lead, but I was confident that a steady pace up my steep route would overtake them in

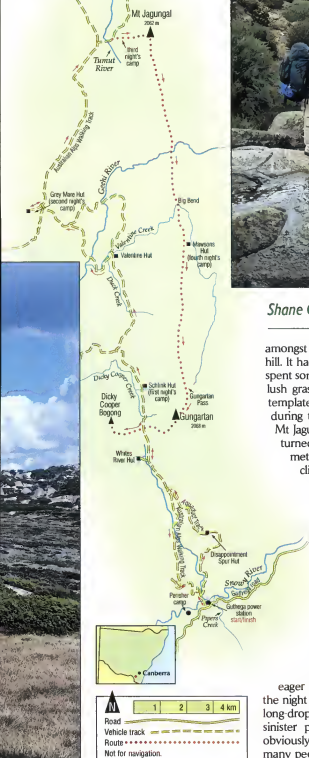
reached the top of Mt Jagungal. The views right around me were stunning, the breeze was suitably refreshing—and I was alone!

I heard some movement down below me and, to my amazement, saw the duo who had left me for dead. They hadn't noticed me above them so, with a smile to match the one Gary had given me earlier, I called out in my best American accent: 'Howa

Our destination for the day was Mawson's Hut which was still a number of kilometres to the south. We mainly travelled through the valleys on spongy grasses and mosses which made it tough going. The warm afternoon and the lack of shade added to our discomfort but we pressed on relentlessly.

Our map and compass reading kept us on course remarkably well. We had to pinpoint

Mt Jagungal and Gungartan



Shane Gellert peruses Valentine Creek below the falls for a dry-foot crossing.

amongst the snow gums on the very next hill. It had been an exhausting day and we spent some considerable time sitting on the lush grass and eating chocolate. We contemplated the things we had experienced during the day, including our success on Mt Jagungal. However, our thoughts also turned to what lay ahead—a 20 kilometre journey including a summit climb and then a half-hour drive, followed by hot showers, heated pool, restaurants and beds!

That night we feasted on our remaining food. We ate like kings in an effort to ease our load for the following day and make our journey quicker. Sprints were high and our pains seemed to be forgotten. As the torches dimmed, we blocked up the few exposed rat holes and lay down on the wooden floor for our final night's sleep.

We awoke early next morning, eager to get going. After our big meal the night before we spent some time in the long-drop toilet, which turned out to be a sinister play on the word 'long'. It had obviously been a favourite 'little room' for many people before us!

Although the air was still crisp, the sun was already streaming down when we left the hut behind. We travelled south once again, and made our way on to the Kerries. The ridge was our perfect, final-day showpiece. It was strewn with impressive rocks and there were stunning views in every direction. The ridge ended at Gungartan Pass, from which point we changed our bearing slightly westward and made our way up the rocks to the summit of Gungartan itself. Gungartan is another of the few Australian peaks above 2000 metres and it was going

to be all downhill from this point on. It was our last chance to soak in the enormity of what we had achieved over the past five days and so those views became imprinted in our minds.

We made our way downhill and back to Schlink Pass, where we had been four days earlier. The pace quickened once we reached the track again, and we followed the Australian Alps Walking Track back to Guthega power station. The car was there waiting for us, and the resort at Lindabyne was all that we had anticipated. Finally we could hobble around in bare feet and soothe our aching bodies in the heated pool and spa bath. We swore that we'd never make such a journey again—but as time passed, thoughts of a new adventure rekindled somewhere inside me. 🐾

Marcus Gellert



is happily married with three children. He is a grazier from western Victoria and went on his first overnight bushwalk ten years ago. He loves the adventure of bushwalking and recording the amazing scenery on film.

one particular place on the map. It was part of Valentine Creek known as Big Bend, and we had read that a deep wade through the water at this point was the best way to cross. We had anticipated this for the past day or two and were thankful for the warm afternoon. When we finally reached the fabled Big Bend we didn't know whether to be disappointed or glad. The quick crossing barely wet our boots.

Within the hour we passed the old, decaying cattle yards and discovered Mawson's Hut

THE TIBETAN



PLATEAU



Toni Dore explores the holy lake of Namtso

I HAD ARRIVED IN TIBET FAR TOO LATE in the year to contemplate doing any serious walking. Most passes were beginning to close and I had neither the time nor the funds to join a guided tour. I did not have a tent, a stove or other equipment a sane person would take into such an environment. However, I did have my sights set on one very special place and that in itself was my guide.

The Tibetan Plateau is one of the most isolated regions in the world. The 2500 kilometre Himalayan mountain range forms its south border, the Karakoram Range its west, and the Kunlun and Altyn Tagh Ranges lie to the north. The harsh, high-altitude plains of Chang Tang (Northern Plateau), the highest and largest in the world, lie north of central Tibet. Thinly populated, this windswept mass of valleys and plains is studded with salt lakes, remnants of the Tethys Sea that did not find a run-off when the plateau went skyward. At an altitude of 4718 metres, the largest of these is Namtso.

'only one friendly monk remains. After playing with the digital camera...he blessed us for our day ahead.'

I spent a week in Lhasa, Tibet's capital, acclimatising and searching for travelling companions. I answered a notice and met Maureen to discuss preparations. Though it is one of the harshest and most desolate places in Tibet and neither of us had any real experience in extreme environments, we agreed to do it our own way. Fortunately, Maureen was the sane type and had all the equipment required for the two-day walk to Namtso.

Experiencing the immensity and solitude of Tibet's Namtso.

All photos Toni Dore



Namtso



We boarded the bus early in the morning, it snaked slowly up the gravelly Lhasa-Golmud road. After six hours of climbing we reached the turn-off for the lake at Damxung. We felt the increase of 800 metres in altitude from Lhasa and dashed to the nearest restaurant for tea.

Before leaving Lhasa, I had imagined a few lovely days of simplicity without interruptions or reminders of the 21st century. However, as Maureen was sitting beside me in her yak coat loaded with mobile phone, pager, laptop computer and digital video camera, it was clear that those few days would come at a later date.

With all that beeping, we easily attracted the attention of a Chinese camera crew. They asked our destination and we explained that we were walking out to Namtso. They were also heading that way and kindly offered us a jeep ride, which we accepted. After all, the time spent walking out to the lake could be better spent actually enjoying walks around the lake. Even the crew agreed that this decision wasn't *really* cheating. However, there is always the part of you that says, 'If I haven't put in the sweat to get there, I really don't deserve what is there.' Stepping outside the warmth of the restaurant, we quickly agreed that we deserved the lift.

The track cut through grasslands dotted with nomad tents and small villages of white-washed, rammed earth houses, roofs trimmed with yak dung in preparation for the winter. Locals wandered around with yak coats and Chicago Bulls caps as we moved through these deep valleys. Freshwater streams cut the barren, isolated slopes that were tinged in colours, resulting in countless picture stops with the crew. Everything has its cost—as payment for our seats we were required to be extras in what Maureen believed was a bit of Chinese propaganda. We pondered, and agreed that we had officially done our part to sell the bright side of Tibet to other tourists.

We wove up through these gentle slopes until we reached the Larchen La (pass) at 5150 metres. It was littered with prayer flags and the awesome expanse of turquoise dazzled our eyes. The chill hit us when we stepped out from the jeep and made it impossible to sit and enjoy the serenity of the vast, sea-like lake that lay before us.

We descended the pass and crossed the vast expanse to Tashi Dorje on the south-east corner of the lake, which had a couple of guest-houses and a monastery. After waving goodbye to the camera crew, we walked around the hills at the edge of the lake and found a semi-caved area to pitch our tents.

As the day ended we watched as the Nyenchen Tanglha Range flanking Namtso

We rose in the morning chilled to the bone and paid a visit to the cave monastery that was honeycombed into one of the hills. The lake is a pilgrimage destination for devout Tibetans, and over the years many lamas and sages have meditated and carved inscriptions into mani stones in the numerous caves. Today only one friendly monk remains. After playing with the digital camera



The lone monk of Tashi Dorje monastery out for a constitutional.

to the south east deep shadows across the plains. This snowcapped range extends 500 kilometres east to west with peaks over 7000 metres, forming a wall. By nightfall the world was like a watercolour of the subtlest pastels giving an unsurpassed sense of space. During the night, winds came sweeping up across the distant snowfields before racing across the lake. The sound was enlivening, like an ocean that had finally found its shore; sleep was impossible.

and everything else that beeps, he blessed us for our day ahead.

The time had come for us to stretch our legs and warm our still frozen bodies. We were guided by cairns and prayer flags as we followed the sacred route along the pebbled shores round the rocky promontory. A spectacular mani wall leads out across the flat plains, below the hills which contain more caves that are occasionally decorated in simple ochre paintings of people and

animals. The silence was overwhelming and frightening.

At this altitude walking was very slow, becoming a ten-step-then-rest affair. When we stopped, the immense noise from walking on the small pebbles ceased and listening to the silence that we'd dared to interrupt was awe-inspiring.

As we climbed the hills overlooking the basin, we began to comprehend the awesome amount of space that enveloped us. Primal hills shaped by the ring marks of earlier water levels were visible by the shoreline. The barren plains separated the countless shades of turquoise that were halted by the

I was walking, the very sound of my breath became intrusive and I lay down amongst the clumps of tussock to watch the sky. There I enjoyed the calm that surrounded me. After another four hours without reaching the huts, I realised that I had become lost in the vast space surrounding me. In the next four weeks the nomads' tents that loomed in the distance would move on to escape the grassy plains that freeze from November to May. I decided it was best to wave my hellos from where I lay and turn back to camp.

Later, Maureen and I sat with a lovely Chinese couple on holiday from Beijing. He

of our return. We were given a lift in the back of a truck and enjoyed the rough, cold and stunning drive as we wove our way over the pass again, leaving the vast expanse of mystery and power behind.

Three years have passed since those few days by Namtso. Sometimes when I am doing the dishes or folding clothes, a memory returns. I relive the feeling of being on the tussock plains surrounded by a piercing blue sky. I shall return and when I do, I'll at least take a tent. ☺

Footnote: Readers will no doubt make up their own minds about whether they would see fit to visit Chinese-occupied Tibet.



Along the sacred route to Namtso—one of Tibet's largest mani walls.

distant, snowcapped mountains, all vaulted down within the deep-blue, domed sky. Maureen asked whether I felt that I was trespassing and my response was: no, but close to it.

Returning to lakeside by early afternoon, we sat and watched mother nature at her temperamental best. As light snow occasionally dusted by, gales picked up over the lake and gushed down across the plains. A storm moved from left to right, to left again before disappearing over those magnificent peaks. With an average elevation equivalent to Mt Everest Base Camp, if that temperament and beauty are to be shown anywhere it is on this vast and timeless plateau.

I decided to spend the final day of our brief visit alone to appreciate the solitude fully. I set off across the grassy plains to Namtso Qu, a small settlement of nomads, that I estimated to be two hours away. When

was an engineer and explained that Namtso is considered as one of the lakes of geomantic perfection by the Tibetans. Because of this a hydroelectric plant has not yet been built; however, the area is now viewed in Beijing as a great destination for ecological tourism. The beauty of the area may soon alter as there are plans to construct a tourist management centre, a wharf, a medical institute and a base camp for mountaineering expeditions with sights set on the countless unclimbed peaks in the Nyenchen Tanglha Range. As we toasted the area with a shot or two of Chinese whisky, we hoped that when we returned there would not be jet skis, powerboats and hotels lining the shore.

Returning to the tent by night, the sky was densely blanketed in stars and the lake shimmered with a metallic, silver glow. In the morning we opted for a swim in the holy waters, emerging invigorated, and thought

Toni Dore

discovered the walking bug nine years ago on a trip through the Annapurna region of Nepal and has recently returned from six weeks' walking the higher passes of Ladakh, India. When not at home in Perth, she is found roaming and photographing more remote parts of Asia and the south-west of Australia.



Tales of an Old River Dog

Russell Withers writes about Trevor Robertson, one of Brisbane's iconic paddling characters

I FIRST MET THE OLD RIVER DOG WITH some trepidation. I'd only heard snippets of Robertson stories but these were enough to convince me that I was making a house call on a man of the stoic adventurer mould. I waded through an overgrown front yard, dodging wrecked kayaks and ducking beneath a canoe strung up under the carport like a whale sidetracked on its way to a beaching. I knocked on the door expecting to meet a tree-like man with piercing eyes buried in one of those huge bushranger beards. The strong, silent type who feared nothing. Not least of all, I was worried I'd get lost in the beard.

silent, one-dimensional character I had concocted was, indeed, a myth.

Robertson's diary of early adventure reads like that of many children growing up in sparsely settled suburbs. An interest in books

ertson's propensity for regurgitation, and the search for relief from the tedium-delinium continuum continued.

The decisive factor in determining Robertson's vehicle for salvation came in cinematic form. The river footage in the film *Deliverance* promised the grace, excitement and wilderness lacking in general practice, and canoeing quickly joined International Roast on his list of obsessions.

Robertson bought his first canoe in 1974 and began to look for likely canoeing companions. Self-instruction on the Brisbane River was followed by an excursion 'in search of a suitable river', leading Robertson and a friend to the Clarence River in northern New South Wales. The adventure that followed on the vast, green flow had Robertson hooked; his companion took two days off work to recover and was never known to paddle again. Robertson finally decided to make paddlers his friends, relieving friends and family and easing their fear of the twitching fingers that signalled impending rain.

The adventure on the Clarence was soon followed by rafting the Nymboida and Franklin Rivers, and the purchase of his first kayak. Robertson joined a loose association of Brisbane paddlers who began to push themselves and increase their



Above, the Old River Dog takes the plunge on New Zealand's Maruia Falls. Left, Trevor Robertson in his favourite hat with partner Jackie Kiewa in Siberia in 2000.

All photos Trevor Robertson collection

'He tumbles away from the boat, but not before his right knee is snapped back beyond the point of breaking.'

Instead, I met Trev—or 'Trevvie' as he's known to his partner, Jackie Kiewa. A tall fellow with just enough of a paunch to suggest that he is human, the piercing eyes replaced by globes that invited me into their world and asked me to reciprocate. Prominent was a bent and broken nose that made me wonder what the hell was big enough to damage it in the first place. Beneath the nose hung a toothy grin that was inclined to emit earth-rending groans of frustration, peals of wild laughter or a bloody good paddling yarn.

And there was no beard. I relaxed.

The room I sat in looked more like an eclectic library than a living area, and I soon became aware that the walls were covered with paddling pictures. I also noticed that I was thoroughly engaged in a two-way conversation with a local paddling icon. The

and film inspired adventurous games in the open spaces of the northern outskirts of Brisbane. Especially Robertsonesque was the fashioning of rough canoes from sheets of corrugated iron caulked with dug-up road tar. Buoyancy was conspicuously absent and each capsized sent the craft to the dam's murky bottom, to be salvaged weeks later for another day's play.

Years at medical school were packed with study, pub life and very few thoughts of adventure. After graduating, Robertson careered toward life in general practice at the Brisbane suburb of Chermide. The sedentary life had him snared, strapped to a desk and hurtling down the bouncy, bouncy road to caffeine addiction. But stimulation by simulation wasn't enough. A fleeting interest in sailing quickly slewed off course under Rob-

skill levels. About the same time he met a 'beautiful, dark-haired woman' named Jackie Kiewa while paddling at Goolang Creek. The romantic and adventurous relationship that followed soon turned into a strategic one when Kiewa became a lecturer in Griffith University's outdoor education programme, providing Robertson with a supply of willing paddling partners and naive protégés.

Robertson also sought escape into wild places by other means. Bushwalking was his preferred secondary option and, in spite of his intense fear of heights, he began to climb in order to share a vital part of Kiewa's life. After listening to a couple of Robertson's



climbing stories, the blurry vision of a fearless adventurer astride a knife-edged ridge sharpens into a figure cowering on a spur the width of a four-lane highway. Boasting an impressive array of phobias, including a fear of rats, birds and enclosed spaces, Robertson's story continues to unfold, the bushranger beard dissolving into a shadow of apprehension.

Despite his terror, Robertson has found himself caught out high on the Beerwah Bolt Route and has accompanied Kiawa on a planned bivouac on Mt Tibrogargan, also in the Glasshouse Mountains. For all of his anxieties, Robertson's fear of heights doesn't

rapids that require you constantly to react, with no time to get scared...a real flow experience'. The cranky veins of New Zealand, Sumatra and North America have also proven to be excellent playgrounds.

The most precious experiences, however, have been expeditions to central Asia and a trip to Siberia in 2000. The Siberian expedition was the culmination of many years of planning and was delayed by the incident on the Blinks. An unquenchable reader, Robertson's obsession with paddling, books and Russia blend into one. In between scouring bookshops for literature on the region, he returned to Siberia in 2002, the books and

rapids—the Coruscades and Newlands Cascades—and I ran them well'.

'You have doubts from time to time about your ability, but you overcome them. The other day, I thought about drawing the line at grade four. But I ended up drawing the line at soft-touch grade fives instead.'

Since that Franklin trip in 1995 Robertson has continued to paddle difficult water in remote places around the world and provide motivation to people half his age. And it appears likely that many more paddlers will experience the unique sensation of hearing an old river dog bark 'Follow me—you'll enjoy this' as he turns and paddles past the brink.

Postscript

It's been a hot, dry summer and the cotton-flow is released from the bottom of Copeton Dam to wind its way west. The rapid is Tombstone, second from last on the Gwydir River. Robertson shoots the top section and punches through the main stopper, but it grabs his boat and pushes it toward the chute to the left of the tombstone rock. He's been down the left before, but this time the water level is low. The boat comes to a sickening halt as it's gripped in a vertical pin. The water pushes into Robertson's back and rushes past his head. He pulls his left leg free of the cockpit, but his right remains in the boat as the force of the water pushes him forward. He tumbles away from the boat, but not before his right knee is snapped back beyond the point of breaking.

Robertson is towed to shore. His companions splint the broken leg and recover his kayak. They paddle the Equaliser and the hour of flat water beyond, and then drive the six odd hours back to Brisbane. A month later, Robertson lumps around his Newmarket home in a knee brace. He thinks long about the coming Siberian summer, and goes back to his programme of rehabilitation. 🐻



Above, Robertson in the ABC Rapids, Gwydir River, NSW.

Left, a strapped-up broken ankle ready for paddling, Blinks River, NSW, 1997.

extend to waterfalls, nor does his claustrophobia apply to the 'green room'. Usually first person on the water, anxiety gives way to carefree play, enthusiastic leadership and, when required, steely determination. In 1997 he broke both ankles attempting a waterfall on the Blinks River in NSW. He paddled the rest of the way out and crawled the two remaining portages *en route* to the end. On another occasion he taught Kiawa to suture and had her practise on an orange so that she could stitch up a gash in his forehead.

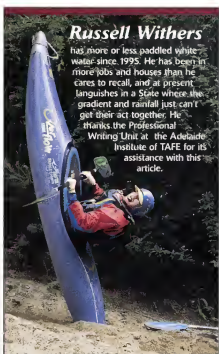
On most occasions canoeing has proven to be a most rewarding method of reaching wild places. There have been around 60 runs on various sections of the Nymboida River over the last 25 years, and Robertson and Kiawa have paddled rivers from north Queensland to Tasmania. Of these, Robertson rates the North Esk River near Launceston as one of the best—continuous hard

travels being research for a book he will write about the Russian adventures.

Despite the distance to reliable playgrounds, the white-water community in Brisbane has expanded considerably since 1974. This is to the credit of experienced paddlers who continue to encourage beginners. No longer in want of likely companions, Robertson's philosophy on paddling partners is simple: 'I prefer to paddle with people I like—I'm not interested in paddling with someone just because they're good'. When the rains fall in northern NSW, action-starved Brisbane boaters check their equipment and try to get through on the Robertson-Kiawa phone line for news of the next trip.

In 2001 Robertson turned 55 and retired from his practice with the intention of finally cataloguing his slides and writing about his adventures. On retiring, is there any thought of slowing down on the river?

'A few years ago we were on the Franklin in high water. I had three swims on easy rapids early in the trip—I wondered whether I was losing my edge and thought about backing off. Then we came to the bigger



Russell Withers

has more or less paddled white water since 1975. He has been in more jobs and houses than he cares to recall, and at present languishes in a State where the gradient and rainfall just can't get their act together. He thanks the Professional

Writing Unit at the Adelaide Institute of TAFE for its assistance with this article.

My Father the Hero

Emma Robertson relates what it's like to be raised by a legend

PICTURE THIS. A MAN SHOOTS A SEVEN metre waterfall on the Blinks River, west of Coff's Harbour, New South Wales. He manages to avoid treacherous rocks on the descent, but cracks his kayak on a boulder hidden in the depths of the pool. He suffers what's known as a pilot's break—two fractured ankles. He paddles on through difficult white water for some 12 kilometres. He pops a couple of Panadol for the pain, then crawls out through the scrub to the car. When he finally reaches a hospital one of his lower legs is plastered, the other is left to heal on its own. The following week he goes to work in a wheelchair—which is ironic because he's a doctor. There's no time to wallow. Soon he'll have to start training for a trip to Russia. This man is in his early 50s. This man is crazy. This man is my father.

Having worked as a journalist in north Queensland for six years, I have met some inspiring people who survived ordeals in the wilderness against the odds: the victims of close encounters with crocodiles and wild weather at sea, people who swam their way to safety after falling overboard into shark-infested waters or found their way home after getting lost in the unforgiving bush. Still, my father's accident-prone adventures never cease to amaze me.

Last year we circumnavigated Hinchinbrook Island, off Cardwell, Queensland, in sea kayaks. As a warm-up, 'Old Man River', as he's known in certain circles, spent a gruelling week on the Herbert River, renowned for its challenging white water, spectacular scenery and crocodiles. The fearsome reptiles didn't seem to faze him, but when I picked the weary troops up at the end of their journey he did seem slightly irritated by a small rash on his arm. By the time we set off for Hinchinbrook Island from Lucinda, with Mt Bowen firmly in our sights, the patches of red had spread across most of his limbs. A couple of days into the journey he was covered in lumps and was in severe pain. I only know this because at night he had injected himself with cortisone from his emergency medical kit by the light of a torch. I would have whined my way around one of the most beautiful places on earth; Dad simply asked us to take some snaps of his rare rash for the record. All that salt water must have added to his agony, but from the front of our boat there wasn't so much as a whimper. He kept himself occupied paddling harder than he normally would to compensate for his novice steering while belting out outdated rock songs. We paddled about 75 kilometres in five days. It took much longer than that for the unsightly allergy to clear up.

While I witnessed that episode, I am forced to get most of my information about his escapades second-hand. My nervous grandparents will ring up, 'Did you hear your father broke his nose again, and a couple of ribs?'. Evidence of another rapid ride no one in his right mind would attempt, but under cross-examination Dad will always play down the dangers of his adrenaline-pumping pursuits.




'The morning after.' Caught out on the Bolt Route, Mt Beerwah, the Glasshouse Mountains, Queensland, Robertson and Kiewa used band-aids to keep warm overnight.

He has a partner in pain. Jackie Kiewa (see article in *Wild* no 72) was forced to spend a night on a 15 centimetre ledge with my father when they got caught out after dark on Mt Beerwah, in the Glasshouse Mountains, Queensland. They'd been testing their aid-climbing skills on the Beerwah Bolt Route and it took a lot longer than they'd anticipated. As they sat exposed to the elements on a narrow ledge, clipped in by just two bolts, Dad ate an orange and Jackie scoffed two scones. Jackie had a hooded jacket, but Dad was forced to wrap a bandage around his head in a bid to stay warm. 'I made a seat out of the rope but it was a bit uncomfortable so Trevor sat on it and I sat on him', Jackie recalled. 'The next day his bum was black and blue from the ropes biting into him, but he didn't complain.' Did I mention that my father is afraid of heights?

That didn't stop him from becoming a proficient rockclimber. Nor did it deter him from joining a mountaineering excursion to New Zealand's South Island, where the climbing couple was forced to brave bad weather after being caught out yet again. 'We were in the Arthurs Pass region, walking up the Waimakariri River to Carrington Hut when the river rose suddenly and we found ourselves on the wrong side', Jackie said. 'We kept making our way up the river through some dense forest, carrying heavy packs including two weeks' food, but decided to stop when it got dark.' The rain was still pelting down and they had just one bivvy-bag between them. That's when Dad's claustrophobia set in. He spent a sleepless night wrapped in his rain gear waiting for the sun to rise.

My father's love of outdoor adventures has lured him across the country and the globe to places I will probably only ever see in an atlas: Uzbekistan, Kygistan, Sumatra and most recently Tuva, which shares a border with Mongolia.

When I asked how that trip went he offered up the usual highlights. The wild horses had refused to carry the kayaks, so the exhausted trekkers had been left with no choice but to lug them across the steep slopes themselves. To top it all off Dad almost got caught in an avalanche. 'I didn't know it was happening until someone yelled at me, then I just started swimming through the snow because it was so deep. It didn't miss me by much', he recounted, calm as ever.

He's afraid of heights, confined spaces and birds, but he still manages to push his body to limits I couldn't dream of reaching at half his age. My father has taught me two valuable lessons in life: love the outdoors and conquer your fears. This man is my hero. 

Emma Robertson

was introduced to the joys of bushwalking before she had taken her first steps. She lives and works in Mackay, north Queensland, where she is close to two natural wonders: the rainforest and the reef.



Sea moods

Victoria's ethereal coastal beauty, by *Anton Weller*



Sunset at Cape Liptrap.



Cape Liptrap.



Cape Schanck.



Anton Weller has been walking, climbing and snowshoeing in south-east Australia for many years. He particularly enjoys multiday walks and doing imaginative rambles with his two-year-old daughter. He currently lives in New South Wales with his partner and two children.

Am I TOO OLD to Take Up Bushwalking?

Cherry Randolph doesn't think so

THERE IS A WOMEN'S TRAMPING GROUP IN New Zealand that has several members over 70 and one who did not take up the activity until she was in her late 60s. Bushwalking seems to be dominated by the young and strong, but those who are able and naturally active should not be intimidated by the feats of those less than half their age. The bush is there for us all and walking carrying a weight is excellent exercise to postpone the effects of old age—and the threat of osteoporosis in particular.

The older you are, the more carefully you have to prepare for any new activity and bushwalking is no exception. Luckily, there are many sources of advice—lists of required equipment and detailed track notes with which you can while away the winter hours working up to your first big trip. You probably know several people who bushwalk and they are bound to want to share their experiences with you. Also, the government agencies responsible for the wilderness areas (such as Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife) are great sources of advice both in publications and over the phone.

We were in our mid-40s when we decided that we wanted to walk Tasmania's Overland Track. We had read about it in *Australian Geographic* where Dick Smith waxed lyrical on the guided tours that enable even middle-aged suburbanites to experience the wilderness. We had both hiked in the UK as teenagers and then briefly as yuppies in our mid-20s; the distinction being to end the day in YHA accommodation versus four-poster bed and *haute cuisine*. The Overland looked great but being herded along with a tour group is not our style so we decided to do it independently. The whole enterprise took nearly six months of planning and preparation.

Choosing the walk

Serendipity may come into this as it did for us but, failing that, there is an abundance of writers out there waiting to introduce you to their favourite walk. You could do worse than read through back issues of *Wild*, where many of Australia's great walks are described with enough illustration to whet your appetite. All Australian States have fantastic bushwalking but the climate may make some walks unsuitable in the height of summer or the depth of winter, so read the track notes carefully. Some recommended books are listed at the end and the outdoors shops in each State stock guides to walks in the immediate vicinity based on



She may not look old but she sure feels it! Iain Groves

local knowledge and written by local 'experts'.

A number of factors influence the length of walk to choose. Distance is not the prime issue as hard walks—steep climbs, rocks, roots and inhospitable surroundings—take

more time and effort than easy walks. The key indicator is really the estimated walking time. Most track notes give a range of times for each stage. Beginners should assume that they will take the longest time and then re-evaluate for next time based on their

experience. Some track times include an allowance for breaks; others require you to add time for lunch, photo calls and rests. If the notes do not make this clear, assume the second option.

If you typically walk for an hour once or twice a week for general fitness do not conclude that a four-hour walk requires you to be four times as fit. When you are bushwalking you do not have all the hubris of daily life to deal with so you have more energy for perambulation. There is, however, a limit and you will have to experiment to find what it is. For a first trip, four to five hours of walking in a day is not excessive. One day in the six-to-eight hour range within a trip of four or more days would also be possible but should be balanced by a short- or rest day afterwards.

There is a difference in scale between a single night out and four plus. I believe it has something to do with getting into the rhythm of bush living or at least getting out of the rhythm of city life. A ranger with Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife told me that for the first two days of the Overland Track I would wonder why I was doing it. On the

important features are. For instance, in *Wild* no 83 is a comparison of rucksacks in which the base weight of the pack is tabulated. Those with a low body weight may want to look at this column carefully since each extra 100 grams of the pack is 100 grams less they can put inside. (The rule of thumb is to carry a loaded pack no heavier than a quarter to a third of your body weight.)

Outdoors shops provide not only the gear you want to buy but are generally staffed by those experienced in outdoors pursuits. Assistants are usually prepared to talk to you about which products they like based on their first-hand knowledge and, of course, they have a vested interest in selling to you.

One difficulty in equipping yourself for the first walk is the thought that you may hate it and never use the gear again. I agonised over whether to buy a Gore-Tex rain jacket. I have never regretted doing so, but it was a big item at the time. We economised and took an old tent with us on the first trip, arguing that we intended to use the huts. That was fine as it turned out, but could have been disastrous if the huts had been full during heavy rain. Over time

mon sense is needed. It is important to discuss your plans with your GP. He or she has an overall view of your state of health and can advise on the wisdom of what you are planning. Also, it is important to maintain your medication regime even in the wild. Take all your pills, injections and creams with you and apply them as normal.

If you have a history of muscular injury, see a physiotherapist early for some exercises to strengthen that part of your body. As you get older, rebuilding and strengthening takes much longer so allow at least six months for this. Also find out how to strap your weak area for extra support and to give you relief if the injury flares up while you are in the wilderness. Do not be easily deterred but do not be foolhardy either. My partner undertook a seven-day bushwalk knowing he had a hernia. His surgeon believed that he would be very unlucky if it strangulated while we were walking but warned that it would need immediate attention if it did. We did the walk without problems but we had an EPIRB (see *Wild* no 83) with us just in case.

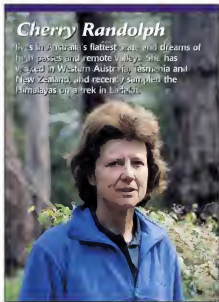
A first aid kit designed for the wilderness is also recommended, with the skill to use its contents. The Wilderness Medicine Institute can help you with this (see www.wmi.net.au).

Doing it

And, finally, enjoy the whole experience—the pain, the pleasure, the people, the peaks, the troughs, the mud, and even the leeches—and don't forget to stop and look around you because the wilderness is a very special place. Bushwalking in remote wilderness is a privilege to which it is worth aspiring. Go for it!

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- *Equipment for Bushwalking* by Chris Baxter (Wild Publications, 2002). 📖



Cherry Randolph

lives in a rural, hilly area, and dreams of high passes and remote valleys. She has walked in Western Australia, Tasmania and New Zealand, and recently climbed the Himalayas on a trek in London.

‘...there is an abundance of writers out there waiting to introduce you to their favourite walk.’

third, I would settle and after that would not want it to end. This is accurate for me and I feel cheated at the end of three-day walks when I have just got used to being out. However, others I know are happy just to have a night in the wild to recharge their batteries; so everyone is different.

Of course you will have preferences regarding the sort of countryside through which you like to walk. Australia has mountain walks, cliff walks, forests and lakes. Over time you will want to experience them all but to start with you can use your preference as a way of choosing which walk you want to be your first.

Sourcing the gear

Almost as much fun as the bushwalking itself is researching and choosing the equipment. As for every activity, there is a plethora of gear designed to make the bushwalker's life more comfortable. You do not need everything but some items are essential. You do not need to have those that are most expensive, but in the main you get what you pay for. Each decision is often a trade-off between cost, size and that all-important measure, weight—because everything you buy you have to carry.

Use all sources of information and advice but then decide for yourself. Product comparison charts in *Wild* tell you not only how the different brands compare but also what

we have upgraded some of the earlier purchases to newer (and more expensive) technology. Other decisions have proved the test of time. I walked the Overland in a long-sleeved polypropylene top to protect me from the sun and still find this is the most comfortable for me, rain or shine.

Most lists indicate items that are essential, and they *mean* essential; for example, a sleeping-mat, boots, rainwear, a stove, a sleeping-bag; but they don't have to be the most expensive. The difference is usually comfort and longevity rather than safety. There is, however, a danger that by taking inadequate equipment (such as a thin sleeping-bag) you will prejudice your experience (cold night, no sleep) and thus forfeit future enjoyment (never doing that again).

Preparing the body

So far, what I have written is equally applicable to the young as the old so what is different? Most young people are invincible or at least behave as if they were. With age comes the realisation that the body has an allotted life span and inherent weaknesses are beginning to show. Older people often have minor but long-standing conditions for which they take regular medication. Heart disease, diabetes, pulled muscles, whiplash injuries, and so forth, are normal topics of conversation. While these do not preclude people from taking up bushwalking, com-

THE WEATHER FORECAST WAS NOT GOOD. Continuing gale-force winds, heavy rain, cold. There was even a severe weather warning for sheep farmers (but I was heartened to note that there was no similar warning for bushwalkers).

I had arrived in Dunsborough, 250 kilometres south of Perth, late on a cold night and in heavy rain. Weather forecaster 1, weather forecastee 0. I made my way to the local YHA and after triple-checking that I had my Gore-Tex and thermals, climbed into my bunk and listened to the downpour.

I was there to walk the Cape to Cape, a 137 kilometre track through the Leeuwin-

Naturaliste National Park. I had been keen to do the walk since the track's completion in 2001. The entire week before my planned start was one of very wild weather (not surprising considering it was midwinter). Much of the walk faces due west and is right in the firing-line of huge swells and strong winds that are generated across the Indian Ocean.

The walk is almost all within the Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park, a narrow, 150 kilometre coastal strip in the southwest of WA. It is dominated by a 600 million-year-old ridge of granite topped with dunes and bordered by 50 metre limestone sea-cliffs.

Contrary to the forecast, I awoke to a glorious day. I caught a taxi to Cape Naturaliste lighthouse where the track begins, 20 kilometres from Dunsborough. My destination was the lighthouse on Cape Leeuwin almost 140 kilometres to the south. There are three operational lighthouses along the length of the walk, an indication of the ruggedness of the coast.

The start of the track is easy walking along the clifftops, and I was feeling good about walking north to south, rather than the more weather-favourable south to north. (I was heading south for no other reason than the vagaries of the bus timetable.) I picked

BY THE SEASIDE

CAPE TO C

Noelene Proud samples Western Australia's 'wineries coast'

out my first track marker, a post with the Cape-to-Cape symbol.

The track meanders along the cliff, sometimes through knee-high heath and sometimes through head-high vegetation. In places the scrub is so thick that if the track weren't cut, the area would be impassable.

After three kilometres I passed Sugarloaf Rock and had a break looking over the impressive rock outcrop. Picking up my pack I set off, feasting on the spectacular coastal scenery.

After an hour of clifftop walking the track descends to Kabbijup Beach, the first beach section of the walk (but most certainly not

the last). The sand was flat and firm, everything a bushwalker could ask for. After less than a kilometre I climbed a sandy track through low dunes as the track headed back up on to cliffs.

A few kilometres further I took advantage of the picnic table at Mt Duckworth campsite to have lunch. Mt Duckworth is one of four camp-sites created for Cape-to-Cape walkers and is shaded and sheltered by tea-trees.

Using the bush camp-sites is one style of Cape-to-Cape walk. For a number of reasons I was doing it another way, mainly using caravan-park camping grounds. It gave

me the luxury of a lighter pack because I didn't need to carry much food. (The hot showers were a bonus.) The track is also very popular with day walkers. The Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park is stunning but it is not wilderness, with road access and facilities making a number of walking options possible.

The first few hours of walking after lunch were in brilliant sunshine. I reached the small township of Yallinyup in mid-afternoon and headed for the café. After a latte, I headed off on the last leg of the day's walk. I eventually descended on to Smiths Beach where I watched the surfers and body boarders in the waves. Near the south end of the beach Gunyulup Brook crosses the beach. It was shallow but quite wide so I took my boots off and plunged in—it was freezing. I walked the last half kilometre in bare feet, soaking up the warmth of the sand.

I was perusing the menu at the park café and was told I would need to book for dinner. I must say, the Cape to Cape is the only walk I've done where I needed to make a dinner reservation. I'm glad I did as the chilli mussels and *chenin blanc* were superb—certainly different from my usual walking fare of pasta and Milo! The area is world famous for its vineyards and wineries and trying the local vino is very much a part of the Cape-to-Cape experience.

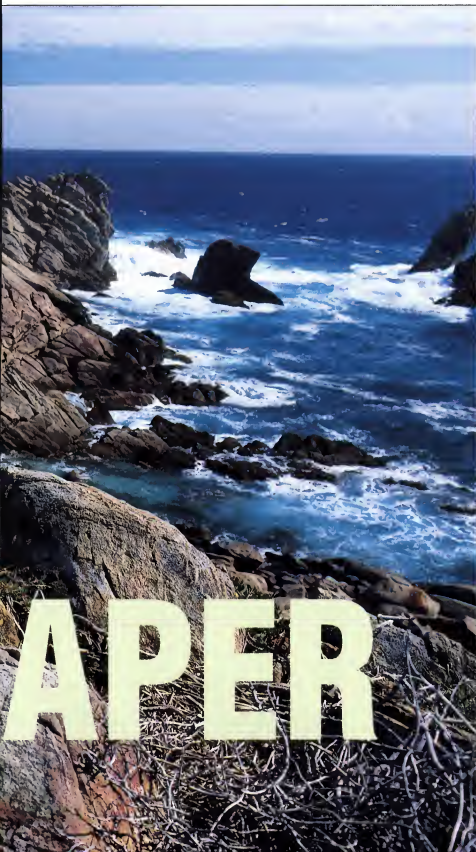
Back in the tent I went to sleep listening to the roar of the ocean.

I made an early start the next day as I planned to walk 29 kilometres to Gracetown, another small holiday town on the track.

The low morning sun gave the rocks a beautiful, orange glow. The going was scrubby, the track winding up, over and in between large boulders. After a walk along the clifftops the track descends a steep stairway, making me feel as though I was hanging over the ocean, with yet more fantastic panoramas. At the foot of the cliff the track crosses Wyadup Brook and continues to alternate between clifftop- and beach walking including a five kilometre clifftop stretch before descending to Quininup Beach.

I followed the beach to Quininup Brook, pausing to chat with day walkers. The brook was flowing reasonably fast and looked about knee-deep so I took my boots off and set across in sandals, boots in one hand. That was my first mistake. I misjudged my footing and had to steady myself with a hand and, yep, the boots and socks got a dunking. Once on the other side I sat on a rock to put them back on and a large wave raced up the beach wetting walker, pack, boots (again) and threatening to carry away my sandals. I grabbed everything in a mad scramble and headed for higher ground, hoping that the other walkers hadn't witnessed too much of the comic spectacle.

Once the slightly squelchy boots were back on I struggled up the steep dunes as the track climbed back to the clifftops.



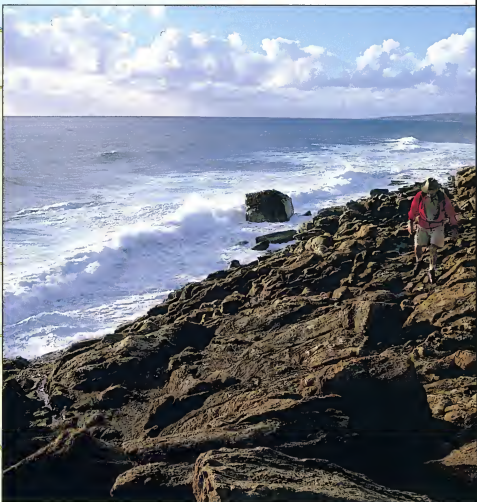
Rugged coastal scenery is a feature of the walk: Sugarloaf Rock. Sven Klinge



During the day the weather developed a cycle of ten minutes of sunshine, total cloud cover, then rain. The wind drove the rain horizontally, so by walking next to the vegetation I was shielded from it.

After a short section through tea-tree the track opens to Moses Rock camp-site, where I stopped for lunch. After more beach sections, creek crossings and cliff-top walking

(with fantastic views along the coast both north and south) I came to a rocky area around North Point, about a kilometre from my destination. I was caught up by two day walkers who were also headed for Grace-town. We scrambled round the cliff and along a rock shelf, which I found difficult at the



Southern Ocean

end of a long day. The wind had picked up dramatically and the heavens opened—we trudged the last few hundred metres in a torrential downpour. I stayed near Gracetown that night in a holiday park, arriving cold and exhausted.

Before falling asleep, I mustered the energy to ring a member of the Friends of the Cape-



Above, rock hopping near North Point. Left, one of the locals making easy going of Deepdene Beach.

Noelene Proud

to-Cape Track to check on conditions for crossing the mouth of the Margaret River. The advice was to cross only if you were a competent wader as it was flowing fairly deeply and swiftly (and coldly too I bet). My experience at Quinip Brook hardly placed me in the 'competent wader' category so I would take the road walk-round suggested in the track notes.

Fortunately, the rain had stopped when I set out on the third day. Once past the south headland forming Cowarup Bay I could see for kilometres down the coast. The foam off the shore must have been 200 metres wide and brilliantly white, a stunning contrast to the deep sapphire-blue ocean behind it.

The track runs parallel to Ellensbrook Beach in vegetation-covered dunes, turning

inland at Ellens Brook. It passes the historical homestead of the pioneering Bussell family and continues past Ellensbrook Cape-to-Cape camp-site. From here the track climbs a steep hill and continues through tall heath, with views over Ellensbrook valley and the coast.

I came to a four-wheel-drive track and turned left along this to a major road where I caught a cab to avoid an eight kilometre road bash. I picked up the track again on the south side of Margaret River, heading up a hill and into bushland from the river mouth. After a few kilometres I dropped down a steep hill and walked the very short distance into the small township of Preveli where I camped among the trees in a holiday park. I celebrated another fantastic day's walking with a 2001 vintage clean skin from the Preveli vineyard.

'...the chilli mussels and chenin blanc were superb—certainly different from my usual walking fare of pasta and Milo.'

The next day was a leisurely 18 kilometres and I had looked forward to a lazy start. The multitude of very vocal kookaburras had different ideas.

The morning's walk was through the aptly named Blackboy Hollow before a steep descent down to Boodjidup Brook, crossed by the small bridge. The track follows the brook to the ocean where the brook winds through a sand bar, taking in a number of hairpin bends before flowing into the sea.

From here it was a tough two kilometre walk on the soft sand of Redgate Beach. The lookout at the south end of the beach seemed a great spot for lunch. While deciding between cheese and bikkies and cheese and nice-cakes I was joined by two end-to-enders walking in the opposite direction. Over lunch (nice-cakes got the guernsey!) I learned that they planned to walk the track in five days and had walked three hours in the dark the previous night to stay on schedule. We watched a sea lion lolling about in the swell and tried (unsuccessfully!) to catch a glimpse of a shipwreck in between waves.

After lunch I followed the track as it climbed from the beach through a few patches of tea-tree, some of which had been sculpted into incredible shapes by the wind. On the steep climb up the side of a limestone outcrop I thought for the umpteenth time how much more difficult this

walk would be in summer heat. Back on the clifftops the views both north and south were superb.

I felt like the king of the castle on the high clifftops above Contos Beach. From here the track turns inland to Contos camp-site, my destination for the day. Although Contos is accessible by road, the only facilities are water and a loo. Three northbound end-to-enders and I had the place to ourselves.

The three young guys planned to walk the track in five days and had covered 32 kilometres that day including nine kilometres of beach. Protected from the wind by the many peppermint trees, we sat around the fire in the drizzle, chatting, drinking tea and eating prodigious amounts of chocolate.

The water for Contos is from a rainwater tank. I'm not sure of the water's properties but the next morning the contents of my water-bottle were a bright blue, some inexplicable reaction with the iodine.

Shortly after I left the camp-site, the track plunged into Boranup Forest. Much of the forest is karri, found only in WA and among the tallest trees in the world. The Cape-to-Cape track is three and a half kilometres away from the coast in some areas of Boranup, the longest distance it strays from the sea. It was such a contrast on a predominantly coastal walk to be in a forest of huge, mag-

Wreck of the Georgette

Even with the lighthouses, there have been many shipwrecks on the wild Leeuwin-Naturaliste coastline.

One of these was the *Georgette*. In 1876 this steam-and-sail vessel was travelling from Geraldton to the eastern States. Off Galgardup Beach (near Redgate Beach) the cargo of timber moved, holing the ship. The *Georgette* flooded and so made a desperate run to the coast.

From the beach, Aboriginal stockman Sam Isaac saw that the ship was in trouble and raced to Walldcliffe, the homestead of the pioneering Bussell family near the mouth of the Margaret River. Sam and 16-year-old Grace Bussell rode more than ten kilometres on their horses through sand-hills and scrub to Galgardup Beach where they saw that the *Georgette* had run aground about 500 metres from shore. She was listing on her keel, the stormy conditions making it difficult to use the lifeboats.

Sam and Grace took their horses into the surf and, passing dangerously close to rocks and reef, rode out to the *Georgette*, yelling to the crew and passengers to grab the mane or tail of the horses, or their clothing. They dragged people to shore, left them on the beach and went again and again into the dangerous surf. They rescued about 50 people.

The survivors were taken to Walldcliffe House for shelter. Sam and Grace received rewards for bravery, with Grace being hailed as Australia's Grace Darling.

nificent trees where the rushing of the wind in the treetops replaced the roar of the ocean.

After leaving the forest I climbed a lookout at Trg Hill for a view back over the forest and the ocean. It is hoped that a Cape-to-Cape camp-site will be constructed on this spot in the future.

I soon reached the beach again (on this walk, doing so is in the same category as death and taxes) and found out why other walkers said Boranup was the toughest beach on the walk. The six and a half kilometre length and soft sand were difficult enough

descends to the start of a limestone platform right on the water. The track follows the rock platform for over a kilometre. It was disconcerting to hear the water rushing and gurgling under my feet. There are numerous small blow-holes and I made a note not to come this way in high seas.

A short scramble got me round the rocky Cape Hamelin. Just behind the cape a small, pristine bay made an ideal place for a break. The grey brooding sky, winter sunshine, rocks glowing in the early morning light and pounding of the waves made an atmospheric setting.

Cape Leeuwin lighthouse, standing on its rocky promontory.

Descending from the cliff on the last leg of the walk, the track is quite overgrown. Many times I thought how glad I was it was winter as I couldn't see where I was putting my feet, let alone what I may have been treading on.

With the lighthouse coming closer all the time, the track skirts Quarry Bay. This is a knee-deep plough through seaweed. I never thought I could find a walking surface. I would like less than soft beach but smelly, wet, I don't know what lies beneath seaweed

is definitely it. From the south side of the bay it is only a short stroll to the lighthouse.

As I came up the lighthouse road the wind reached a crescendo. I had expected gale-force conditions early in the walk but it was fitting that the strongest gales encountered were at the rugged, hazardous cape where the Indian and Southern Oceans clash in a fury of white water.

I braced myself at the base of the lighthouse that has been warning ships from the rocks since 1896. As I looked out from the cape I thought back on the 140 kilometres I had walked to be at Australia's most south-westerly point. I enjoyed the thundering spectacle until it was almost dark and I went to find my prearranged lift into town. Once in Augusta I celebrated a brilliant walk with a *sauvignon blanc semillon* from the Redgate winery. 🍷

Map and track notes

The Cape to Cape Track Guidebook by Jane Scott (details at www.margaret-river-online.com.au/capetrack/)



Nearly there! The author approaching the lighthouse at Cape Leeuwin, where the Indian and Southern Oceans meet. Proud collection

but the real killer was the relentless slope. At one point I was tempted to walk backwards. Furthermore, the wind was blowing very hard, causing the sand to blast across the surface. Sand blew into my face and the sunscreen did a nice job of making sure that it was firmly glued on. I kept trudging through the soft sand and after what seemed an eternity I reached the end of the beach and my destination for the day, a camping ground in the small settlement of Hamelin Bay. Here, I tipped the remains of the beach out of my boots.

After yet another night of rain I made an early start on my sixth and final day on the track. I had arranged a lift into town for my pack and walked the last day with a day pack. (It wasn't the 27 kilometres that worried me but the eight kilometres of beach.)

Despite the persistent drizzle the sun was still shining. After passing Foul Bay lighthouse the track cuts across a headland and

The track then took me to Deepdene Beach. The sand was blissfully flat and with a day pack the beach walking was infinitely easier. I quickly ran through the shallow Turner Brook without even taking my boots off.

The beach walking continues for about another five kilometres. It wasn't a chore at all as there were so many things to look at: offshore rocks, shore line reefs and an array of sea birds including pairs of endangered plovers.

Along the beach I came upon another sea lion, soaking up the sun and scratching his back on the sand. The beach narrowed as I walked south. In places I had to watch ahead and scurry across sections in between the wash of the waves.

At the end of the sand the track follows another rock ledge, climbing back to the cliffs after a couple of kilometres. There were numerous views to my destination,



Noelene Proud

swaps the 'burbs of Perth for bushtracks and wilderness areas whenever possible. Her work in libraries is very handy for peering up on the trail destination.

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TRACK NOTES

The Stinson WRECK

An historical walk in southern Queensland, by John Daly



Examining storm damage to the rainforest canopy. John Daly

A STINSON AIRLINER LEFT BRISBANE ON 17 February 1937 with seven people on board and disappeared after flying into a violent cyclone. Popular theory was that it had crashed into the sea near Newcastle and all hope was lost. Seven days later, Bernard O'Reilly deduced it had crashed in the McPherson Ranges, Queensland, somewhere along a direct line he drew on a map, between its last sighting and Lismore, New South Wales, its first scheduled stop.

The next day he set out on horseback with some bread, a bag of onions and some tea. At Bethongabel Lookout he sent his horse home, then continued on foot towards Mt Throakban. From the summit of Throakban the clouds lifted long enough for him to spot a single, burnt tree, 13 kilometres and three ridges away.

Line of sight navigation was impossible due to sheer cliffs, deep gorges and impenetrable rainforest matted with lawyer vine, but Bernard was an excellent bushman. Using the simple bush logic that the high lateral ranges run from north to south, so that by crossing them at right angles you must be heading west, he set out towards that burnt tree through terrain where visibility was often reduced to ten metres. He didn't see the tree again until it was 20 metres away, eight hours later. Here he also found two survivors; Proud with a compound fracture of the leg and Bin-stead who was badly burnt. Jim Westray had also survived the crash but died after falling down a waterfall whilst going for help.

This walk follows the Stretcher Track, a route cut by rescuers through thick scrub to

the crash site. The second day descends a steep ridge to the banks of Christmas Creek, near Westray's Grave.

Safety

There are no serious navigational difficulties on day one so long as you stick to the ridge-top—even when skirting round tree falls. The second day entails scrambling down steep slopes. Leeches and ticks can be a nuisance. There is reliable water at the Stinson camp-site, but none elsewhere.

Further reading

Suggested further reading includes *Green Mountains* by Bernard O'Reilly, *Take A Walk in a National Park*, *Port Macquarie to Brisbane* by John & Lyn Daly and *The Search for the Stinson* by Mark Yuile, *Wild* no 25.

Permits

Camping permits are required at \$4.00 a person a night. Contact Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service at Lamington National Park. Phone (07) 5544 0634.

Access

A car shuttle is necessary. Follow the Mt Lindesay Highway south from Brisbane to Beaudesert and continue 14 kilometres to Laravale. Turn left at the Christmas Creek road and drive 27 kilometres to Stinson Park. The walk starts two kilometres along the

Gap Creek road to the right. Continue on the Christmas Creek road for a further six kilometres until its end and leave a vehicle here. Return to the Gap Creek road.

The Walk

The first section of this walk follows a rough gravel road steeply uphill through private property. Five minutes from the start you reach a hut. Swing left and contour south-east along a four-wheel-drive track, then follow it uphill along a steep ridge. There are good views west to Neglected Mountain as you ascend. About 30 minutes from the hut, a distinct foot-pad veers left, then contours towards a knoll (IGR 030679). The precipitous bluff to the north-east is Buchannans Fort.

the walk AT A GLANCE

Grade	Hard
Length	Two days
Distance	20.5 kilometres
Type	Historical walk through thick rainforest
Region	South-east Queensland
Nearest town	Beaudesert
Start/finish	Start at the Gap Creek road, finish at Christmas Creek
Map	Lamington 1:25 000 Sunmap
Best time	Spring to autumn
Special point	Lamington is a fuel-stove-only area

The route now descends before climbing very steeply along an open, eucalypt-covered ridge to another knoll (IGR 040680). From here the panorama extends south to Black Snake Ridge, west to the distant Mt Lindsay and north along the Christmas Creek valley. A small colony of endangered eastern bristle birds inhabits this area and you may also hear the melodious call of the Alberts lyrebird.

The route now enters rainforest and crosses two long-fallen, mossy logs. From here onwards, the route is often obscured by tree falls and there is no option other than to skirt round the side of the debris that appears to be less cluttered with lawyer vine.

The route winds from side to side but whenever you lose sight of a foot-pad, head for the high ground and continue walking eastward along the top of the ridge. There are several sections where the forest is open enough to traverse without the need to follow a distinct pad.

After slogging through rainforest for about an hour, you will reach a mossy rock cairn (IGR 058687). This marks the start of a rough route south to Running Creek. You will need to be at this point by midday to avoid spending the night in the bush! About 20 minutes

beyond this cairn you reach an open section of forest at a stand of tall turpentines. Take a short deviation left towards the escarpment for views north-east to Lamington Falls.

After a further 30 minutes you should reach a massive tree fall. Thick scrub matted with lawyer vine makes skirting round difficult, so the best option is to scramble straight over the jumble of fallen logs.

The route now winds up and down, constantly detouring left and right to avoid tree falls. After a long uphill climb, the route descends to a small clearing beside some ancient Antarctic beech trees. From here, you follow an obvious foot-pad as you climb gradually uphill again to a distinct track junction. A metal plate in a tree is inscribed with, 'Xmas Ck 13.6 kms 10 hrs'.

If you feel fresh enough, it's worth dropping your packs and heading right uphill for a few hundred metres to a camp-site at Point Lookout. From here, there are panoramic views across the Tweed valley. Return to your packs and follow a distinct track downhill for 600 metres to the Stinson camp-site. A well-defined track on the left leads steeply downhill to the headwaters of Christmas Creek, a reliable water source. A blaze on a tree to the right of the camp-site marks the start of a very steep track leading downhill to the Stinson wreck. Twisted sections of pipe

stinging trees at the base of a narrow, muddy chute where the track swings right and contours before another cliff.

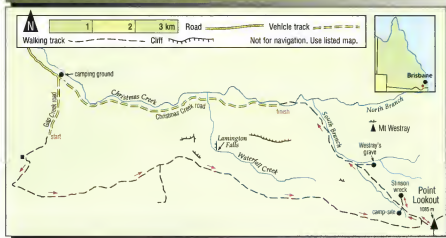
The track leads downhill steeply before veering right again and becoming much drier near the bulbous roots of several large trees. From here, there is another steep descent towards a long-fallen tree. Scramble over this tree, then veer left towards a cauldron-shaped, muddy gully. A huge log leads straight down the middle of this gully to the track below. This used to be the normal descent route but a foot-pad now continues left past the head of this log and then descends by a much easier route to a track junction on the banks of Christmas Creek.

Bernard O'Reilly found Jim Westray's body beside this creek. He is now buried in a shady rainforest glade 300 metres upstream. A distinct track leads to the grave site.

One hundred metres downstream from the junction, smooth rock slabs at the head of a waterfall make a great lunch spot. This is also a good place to cool off on a hot day.

The track now climbs a muddy bank before winding along the banks of the creek. Several huge logs have fallen across the track but they are easy to climb over or under. The track soon reaches a major tributary but large boulders in the creek-bed make it relatively easy to cross even after heavy rain. The track

The Stinson wreck



frame are all that is left of the plane. A small brass plaque commemorates the people who died in the wreck. Unfortunately, another small plaque commemorating Bernard O'Reilly's rescue of the two survivors was stolen a few years ago.

Day two

Today it's all downhill! A distinct track leads north-west through a tangle of liana vines. The gradient soon increases along the top of a steep ridge to a patch of exposed boulders (IGR 110682). Just beyond here you reach a three metre cliff. The original route traversed a narrow ledge along the left of this cliff but an exposed tree root ten metres to the right now provides a much safer descent. Veer left at the bottom of the cliff and continue downhill diagonally. Take care to avoid several

passes a small waterfall and crosses another creek before entering a very attractive section of palm forest where gnarled liana vines hang from the canopy.

Soon after, you reach a large waterhole at a sweeping bend in the creek. Continue past a stand of lichen-covered coachwood and a patch of lantana. A tall stand of majestic, flooded gums line the track as you make your way to a creek crossing. It is usually possible for the nimble footed to rock hop across the creek without getting wet feet but after heavy rain there is no option other than to wade across. From the opposite bank, a dirt road leads 300 metres to the car.

John Daly and his wife Lyn have written five bushwalking guidebooks. They have turned their passion for nature conservation, bushwalking and travel into an occupation that allows them to spend months at a time working (walking) in the bush.

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TENTS

FOR BUSHWALKING

A home among the gum-trees, by John Chapman

Wild Gear Surveys: What they are and what they're not

The purpose of *Wild Gear Surveys* is to assist readers in purchasing specialist outdoors equipment of the quality and with the features most appropriate for their needs; and to save them time and money in the process.

The cost of 'objective' and meaningful testing is beyond the means not only of *Wild*, but of the Australian outdoors industry in general and we are not aware of such testing being regularly carried out by an outdoors magazine anywhere in the world. Similarly, given the number of products involved, field testing is beyond the means of Australia's outdoors industry. *Wild Gear Surveys* summarise information, collate and present it in a convenient and readily comparable form, with guidelines and advice to assist in the process of wise equipment selection.

Surveyors are selected for their knowledge of the subject and their impartiality. Surveys are checked and verified by an independent referee, and reviewed by *Wild's* editorial staff. Surveys are based on the items' availability and specifications at the time of the relevant issue's production; ranges and specifications may change later. Before publication each manufacturer/distributor is sent a summary of the surveyor's findings regarding the specifications of their products for verification.

Some aspects of surveys, such as the assessment of value and features—and especially the inclusion/exclusion of certain products—entail a degree of subjective judgement on the part of the surveyor, the referee and *Wild*, space being a key consideration.

'Value' is based primarily upon price relative to features and quality. A product with more elaborate or specialised features may be rated more highly by someone whose main concern is not price.

An important criterion for inclusion is 'wide availability'. To qualify, a product must usually be stocked by a number of specialist outdoors shops in the central business districts of the major Australian cities. With the recent proliferation of brands and models, and the constant ebb and flow of their availability, 'wide availability' is becoming an increasingly difficult concept to pin down.

Despite these efforts to achieve accuracy, impartiality, comprehensiveness and usefulness, no survey is perfect. Apart from the obvious human elements that may affect assessment, the quality, materials and specifications of any product may vary markedly from batch to batch and even from sample to sample. It is ultimately the responsibility of readers to determine what is best for their particular circumstances and for the use they have in mind for gear reviewed.



The wilderness experience, Nepalese style. Iain Groves

MODERN TENTS ARE RELIABLE WONDERS of lightweight materials. Manufacturers spend a lot of effort and time designing these tents and most walkers never notice. Designers argue over small refinements and improvements while their customers select on overall design and then simply use the tent without noticing all the design features. Let's face it, when something works you take it for granted but when it fails—that you remember. The good thing about all this manufacturing effort for users is that most tents are now excellent and at times there is little to choose between them. There have not been any major changes to tent design since the last *Wild* survey and new models show only minor refinements on previous designs.

The tents surveyed have not been rated with regard to waterproofness as they will all keep you dry when new. Longer term, no matter what material is used, all tent floors eventually leak. I counter this by using a groundsheet of vinyl or plastic inside the tent on the bathtub principle—the tent floor keeps most of the water out while the second layer ensures that I stay dry. This trebles the life of a tent as the top layers will outlast the floor by many years.

This survey concentrates on tents for general bushwalking and provides an idea

of the range and types of tents that are currently available in Australia.

Intended capacity

The number of average-sized adults that the tent is intended to accommodate (as specified by the manufacturer).

Design/shape

Designs have been classified according to the pole layout. Most tents have rectangular or near rectangular floor shapes and a tunnel is classified as having the opening on the narrow side (usually the head end). A traditional tunnel has poles which do not cross. A tunnel/dome has the door at the head end but utilises poles that cross and hence is a hybrid of a tunnel and a dome. A dome design has poles that cross and the entrance or entrances on the longer side of the inner tent.

Maximum internal dimensions

The largest measured size of the inner in order of width x length x height. Generally, sizes are useful in comparing space except for some irregular designs where the maximum size is not typical of the tent.

Tents for bushwalking

			Intended capacity, people	Design/shape	Maximum internal dimensions, centimetres, length x width x height	Total weight, kilograms	No of poles	No of pegs, mini-max	No of vestibules	No of fly entrances	Roominess	Ease of pitch	Stability	Access	Value	Comments	Approx. price, \$
Bibler USA www.bibbertents.com																	
	Pinon	2	D	225 x 120 x 110	2.6	3	2-10	2	2	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●1/2	●1/2		900
	H-tent	2	TD	218 x 127 x 112	1.9	2	0-10	0	1	●●1/2	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●1/2	●1/2	Optional vestibule extra	1150
	Ahwannee 2	2	D	230 x 132 x 115	2.4	2+1	0-10	0	2	●●●	●●●	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●	As above	1290
Kathmandu China www.kathmandu.co.nz																	
	Cisalpine 11	2	D	215 x 130 x 105	3.3	2	2-14	2	2	●●1/2	●●●	●●	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●1/2		500
	Northstar Plus	2	TD	230 x 145 x 105	2.8	3	4-18	1	1	●●●	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●		800
	Mountain Plus	2	TD	220 x 140 x 105	3.6	4	4-26	2	2	●●●	●●1/2	●●●●	●●●	●●	●1/2		1020
Macpac New Zealand/Vietnam www.macpac.co.nz																	
	Apollo	2	D	220 x 140 x 115	3.1	2	2-10	2	2	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●●		600
	Minaret	2	T	260 x 120 x 100	2.6	2	4-13	1	1	●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●●	●●	●●1/2	●●1/2		770
	Olympus	2	T	220 x 145 x 115	3.2	3	4-18	2	2	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●●●	●●●1/2	●●	●●		1000
Marmot China www.marmot.com																	
	Racer X	2	D	233 x 140 x 100	2.7	2	2-10	2	2	●●●	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●	●●		500
	Odyssey	2	TD	233 x 157 x 110	2.8	3	4-13	1	1	●●●1/2	●●1/2	●●●	●●●	●●1/2	●●●		550
	Swallow 2	2	D	240 x 150 x 107	4.1	3	3-15	2	2	●●●1/2	●●●	●●●●	●●1/2	●1/2			970
Mountain Designs China www.mountaindesigns.com																	
	Pass	1	SH	260 x 110 x 110	2.0	1	6-10	1	1	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●	●●●	●●●●			350
	Plateau	2	D	230 x 120 x 110	2.4	2	3-13	2	1	●●1/2	●●●	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●●●			450
	Ridge 11	2	D	210 x 140 x 115	3.3	2+1	2-12	2	2	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●1/2	●●●			550
Mountain Hardware China www.mountainhardware.com																	
	Hammerhead 2	2	TD	245 x 143 x 112	3.2	3	4-8	2	2	●●●1/2	●●	●●●1/2	●●●	●●●			500
	Skyview	2	TD	258 x 163 x 98	4.0	4	2-9	2	2	●●●●	●●1/2	●●●●	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●1/2		600
	Trango 2	2	TD	230 x 170 x 110	4.0	4+1	2-21	2	2	●●●●	●●	●●●●	●●1/2	●●			850

Total weight

Survey weights include everything required for use when bushwalking, as specified by the manufacturer. Weights can differ by 200-300 grams from these figures due to variations in materials and ongoing manufacturing changes. Some manufacturers quote either minimum or in-use weight, which usually leaves out extras like pegs and carry bags. Ignore these lighter weights as you will need to carry the extras most of the time. Sometimes weight can be reduced a little by replacing the pegs supplied with lighter models.

Number of poles

The first number indicates how many full-length poles there are that run from ground to ground. When there is a +, the second number shows the number of shorter poles the tent has. These are usually to hold up the top of the vestibule, improving entry and storage volume. All tents surveyed have aluminium shock-corded poles. Poles are made in a wide variety of diameters and you should check carefully when purchasing a spare or replacement pole.

Pegs

Minimum pegs are those required to put up the tent and fly in windless conditions. The maximum includes all peg- and storm-guy points.

Number of vestibules

The number of vestibule areas without a floor that can be used for gear storage. The vestibules in all models can be reached from the inner tent.

Number of fly entrances

This column indicates the number of external doors in the tent fly. If ventilation is important, consider tents with two doors, at opposite ends, as they can be opened to provide flow-through ventilation.

Roominess

To be scientific, I rated the inner of each tent for its length, width and height giving each a mark from half to one-and-a-half. I then added up the score and considered a half-

point adjustment for roof, and vestibule design.

Ease of pitch

Factors which affect this rating are whether a tent has continuous pole-sleeves, the width of pole sleeves (some are very narrow!) and whether the poles cross (which makes it harder to erect).






Stability

This rates the overall stability of a tent against side forces. As I could not test the tents in a wind-tunnel, this rating is subjective and affected by the way I have seen designs perform in the field. Little features such as the attachments between the fly and inner, internal stiffeners and how well cut the panels are can make a big difference.

Access

I rated the tents on how easy I found it to enter the tent and sit down. Tents with high- or wide openings rate better than those with low or long entrances. Half a point was

Tents for bushwalking continued

		Intended capacity, people	Design/shape	Maximum internal dimensions, length x width x height	Total weight, kilograms	No of poles	No of pegs, inner-max	No of vestibules	No of fly entrances	Roominess	Ease of pitch	Stability	Access	Value	Comments	Approx price, \$
MSR China www.msrcorp.com																
	Zoid 2	2	T	250 x 140 x 100	2.1	2	4-10	2	4	●●●	●●/2	●●/2	●●/2	●●●/2		530
	Fusion 2	2	TD	220 x 120 x 110	3.5	3	4-8	1	1	●●/2	●●●	●●●	●●●/2	●●/2		850
	Sidewinder 2	2	D	230 x 140 x 110	3.3	3	2-7	2	2	●●●/2	●●●/2	●●●/2	●●●	●●●	Third pole optional	850
Salewa Vietnam www.salewa.com																
	Mica	1	D	210 x 120 x 105	2.3	2	2-12	1	1	●/2	●●●	●●●/2	●●/2	●●●		340
	Bergen II	2	D	220 x 140 x 102	2.9	2+2	4-18	2	2	●●●	●●●	●●●/2	●●●/2	●●●		450
	Sierra Leone II	2	D	230 x 155 x 110	3.4	2+1	4-18	2	2	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●/2		570
Sierra Designs China www.sierradesigns.com																
	Cap Flashlight	2	T	226 x 147 x 109	1.9	2	6-13	1	1	●/2	●●●	●●	●●	●●●		380
	Gamma fl	2	D	220 x 140 x 115	2.6	2+1	3-9	1	1	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●		350
	Asteroid fl	2	SH	250 x 205 x 105	2.0	1	5-9	1	1	●●●	●●●	●●	●●/2	●●●	Has an irregular floor shape	400
Snowgum Vietnam www.snowgum.com.au																
	Spinflex	2	SH	230 x 120 x 110	2.3	1	4-9	2	2	●●	●●●	●●/2	●●/2	●●●	More comfortable as a one-person tent	350
	Storm Shelter 2	2	D	210 x 135 x 125	3.1	2+1	2-12	2	2	●●●	●●/2	●●●	●●●/2	●●●		400
	Storm Shelter 3	3	D	210 x 170 x 125	3.9	2+1	2-12	2	2	●●●	●●/2	●●/2	●●●/2	●●●/2		500
Wilderness Equipment Vietnam www.wildernessequipment.com.au																
	The Shadow	2	SH	210 x 180 x 110	3.0	1	4-10	1	4	●●/2	●●/2	●●	●●●	●●/2		500
	Second Arrow	2	T	200 x 120 x 102	2.7	2	3-10	2	2	●●	●●●	●●/2	●●●	●●●	Lighter fly available	500
	First Arrow	2-3	T	220 x 160 x 120	3.5	3	3-9	2	3	●●●/2	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●/2	As above	695

● poor
●● average
●●● good
●●●● excellent

Design/shape D dome with entrance on long side, SH single hoop, TD dome or tunnel with crossing poles, entrance on short side, T tunnel with entrance on short side
Bibler's Tent and Ahwahnee 2 are single skin tents, doors are inner only
fl not seen by referee
The country listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made

Buy right

- Lie down and make sure that the inner is long enough. Tents should be at least 20 centimetres longer than your height; add an extra 10 centimetres to this if the roof is close to the floor at your feet.
- When sitting up in the highest part of the tent, is there enough room to change clothes without crushing the other occupant?
- For ventilation, there should ideally be two openings as high as possible. Most tents use the entrances—check that they stay open when wet and don't allow rain to fall directly on to the floor.
- Entrances vary widely—consider what they will be like in poor weather when you try to remove a waterproof jacket as you crawl in.
- In warm or humid climates, sometimes only an insect screen is required. Check whether it is possible to erect the inner without the fly.

deducted for designs that exposed the floor to rain when the tent door was opened.

Value

This is not simply a value-for-money rating. I have considered each tent's weight, overall features, quality and internal size as well as the price in rating it for general bushwalking use ranging from the tropics to extended walks throughout Australia. All tents surveyed are very good, and a low rating does not mean that a model is a poor tent.

Price

This is the recommended price including GST. Those who give preference to Australian- or New Zealand-made equipment will be disappointed as all tents are now made overseas. In general this has reduced prices.

Availability

You will not find all the tents surveyed available in any one shop, or even in every State. Tents require a lot of floor space and are expensive to stock—most shops have

between one and three brands with only some models on sale or display. Some brands have many more models than the three shown in this survey.

Other brands available

Brand	Distributor	Contact
Black Wolf	Phoenix Leisure Group	(02) 9667 0899
Exped	Aktiv8	(02) 9939 5611
Fairydown	Arthur Ellis	www.arthurellis.co.nz
GoLite	Sea to Summit	(08) 9221 6617
The North Face	Playcorp	(03) 9863 1111
Vango	Anso	(03) 9471 1500
Vaude	Rucac Supplies	(02) 9546 8455

Bushwalking writer John Chapman has been contributing to *WILD* since issue one. His favourite place is Tasmania although he regularly visits all other Australian States.

This survey was refereed by Scott Edwards.

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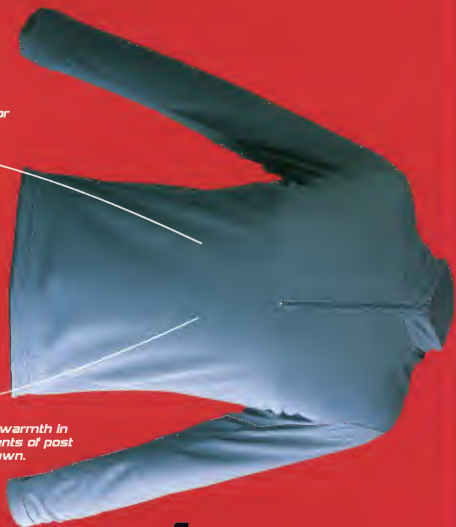
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THERMAL TOPS

Greg Caire's looking for some hot stuff

Wild Gear Surveys: What they are and what they're not

(See box on page 71)

FOLLOWING THE RAPID INCREASE in the variety of thermal tops available in Australia in 2001, a burst of activity from designers and the textile industry has further extended the options in the market for new body-layer garments. The array of fabrics, philosophies and concepts on offer is even more bewildering than previously. The good news is that now, more than ever, it's possible to find underwear specifically tailored for your intended use.

Thermal- or base layers form the basis of defence against the cold, trapping warm air next to the skin and transporting moisture away to leave you feeling drier and more comfortable. Subsequent clothing layers, which may be of natural or synthetic fibres, trap further warm air and, with a water-

proof outer-shell garment, form an integrated clothing system.

Of particular interest in the evolution of thermals has been the influence of fashion on function. Old bushwalkers may choke on their scroggin at the idea that style is important when choosing a thermal top; however, an emphasis on appearance has led to

on its own or as a lightweight outer layer, performing two functions and requiring less clothing in the pack. Almost single-handedly, New Zealand superfine merino-wool garments have redefined the look and feel of thermal under-layers with many excellent products from other manufacturers following their lead. The industry has a prolif-

Buy right

- **Purpose:** Consider the intended use of your garment. If cutting down on weight is a major consideration, go for the lighter options. If you want to use a single garment as a thermal and a shirt or outer clothing layer (as when travelling), try it on and see how it looks. Flat seams and seamless shoulders are less likely to rub on pack straps—a good idea when carrying a pack.
- **Natural fibres or synthetic:** This is a personal choice—both options provide excellent functionality and are worthy of consideration. Balance aesthetic considerations against price and performance features.
- **Fit and style:** Some thermals drape loosely over the wearer while others are worn skin-tight for optimum performance. Make sure that the top you buy will layer effectively with your other clothing. Check that the sleeves are of adequate length and allow you to move your shoulders and elbows easily.
- **Performance:** Do you want maximum wicking performance for heavy activity (such as carrying a pack over steep ground, skiing the Main Range or cranking long alpine routes) or would a thicker, warmer thermal for greater static warmth be more appropriate? When choosing clothing for strenuous activity, don't pick a product that retains too much heat as excessive perspiration and overheating may be a problem.



They might look cool but you can bet that there is some pretty uncool thermal wear under all that formal finery. (Midnight ascent, Mt Feathertop, Victoria.)

Anton Weller

thermals that stand on their own as lightweight outer layers, which increases their utility and greatly widens consumer choice.

Weight

This column is based on a men's medium-sized top and was provided by the manufacturer and checked on a small set of kitchen scales.

Style: the rebirth of cool

In the survey table, style refers to whether the garment is long- or short-sleeved. In addition, the 'Range of styles' heading describes the thermal's collar type (crew, polo, zip polo or V-neck) and cut. These days style is a whole new category which goes beyond these simple garment features, with appearance, as much as functionality, driving product development. A simple thermal T-shirt or pullover, for example, can now be worn

eration of garments which look and feel smart while maintaining their practical functionality. These developments have resulted in design changes to both natural- and synthetic-fibre products.

Fabric

An attempt to simplify the array of fabrics available has been made in the 'Name game' box. It is a gross understatement to say that there is a wide variety of specific-function thermal fabrics available, and the consequence of covering so many options is oversimplification. It is important that consumers read each manufacturer's technical data to gain a better understanding of a specific fabric's intended use and performance. Fabric can be roughly divided into natural- and synthetic fibres.

The rise of natural fibres. The natural fibre option (predominantly superfine merino wool) generally makes for a slightly

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heavier thermal garment. A new blend of silk and merino wool is used by Silkbody (see 'Other brands available') and redefines the weight criteria for durable, natural fibre products. Wool and wool blends are warm when wet; however, they take longer to dry than most synthetics. Some outdoors people prefer the aesthetic qualities of natural fibres. The manufacturers claim that natural products are comfortable over a wider range of temperatures than synthetics, as moisture

Name game

The number of base-layer fabric types has mushroomed in both the natural- and synthetic fibre arenas and continues to grow with ever-improving technologies. A few categories are listed below:

Chlorofibre

Similar to polypropylene but not quite as good at wicking moisture, it is derived from polyvinyl chloride (PVC). A good thermal insulator, it tends to evaporate rather than melt when exposed to flame, making it a safer choice near open fires and stoves.

Driflow

A dual-denier or mesh-knit polyester fabric that wicks moisture very well and performs differently from other polyesters. It has a wide comfort range, performing well in warm environments while providing insulation in cold weather.

Polyamide

Has an excellent resistance to fire, with good thermal efficiency. Slightly heavier than other synthetic fabrics of similar warmth.

Polyester

This fabric feels soft against the skin and appears in many commercial forms including the materials BiPolar, Coolmax, Powerdry and Powerstretch. It has wicking performance slightly below that of polypropylene and can be a single-filament fibre or a spun fibre. Most fleece-style and mesh-knit fabrics are polyesters based.

Polypropylene

Recognised as the fibre with the greatest moisture-wicking ability, it can be produced from single-filament fibre or a variety of spun fibres. Older-style polypropylene retains body odours more readily; however, new fabric treatments and weaves have vastly improved this situation. Cheaper fabrics can be a little harsh next to the wearer's skin when carrying a pack.

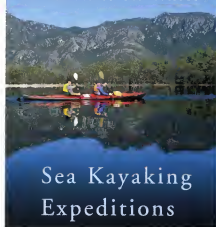
Silk/merino wool blends

A blend of 80 per cent silk and 20 per cent superfine merino wool combines thermal efficiency and light weight in a natural-fibre blend. The wool components help to improve the silk fibre's durability. Available through mail order from Silkbody.

Superfine merino wool

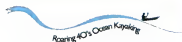
Superfine merino wool products have none of the 'prickle' associated with traditional, coarser wool fabrics, and wool is naturally fire-retardant. Wool is generally more sensitive to incorrect laundering but the new thermal fabrics are easy to care for and machine washable.

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Thermal tops

Model/ description	Style	Weight, grams	Fabric	No. of fabric weights	Matching pants	Range of sizes	Range of styles	Performance	Value	Comments	Approx. price, \$
Cigana Australia www.cigana.com.au											
Airways	LS	200	SW	2	Yes	S-XXL	CN, VN	●●●1/2	●●1/2	Flat-lock seams	185
Damart France www.damartonline.co.uk											
 Thermolactyl t	SS	na	T	1	Yes	M: XS-XXL W: XS-XXL	CN, VN	●●●	●●●	Thermolactyl (85%)—nylon (15%) blend	45
Thermolactyl t	LS	na	T	1	Yes	XS-XXL	CN, VN	na	●●●	As above	55
Everwarm New Zealand www.everwarm.co.nz											
 Merino	LS	200	SW	1	Yes	M: S-XL W: S-XL	CN	●●●1/2	●●●	Fine wool, comfortable next to skin	110
Extreme Clothing New Zealand www.extremeclothing.com.au											
 Crew Neck	LS	180	P	1	Yes	XS-XL	CN	●●●	●●1/2	Tubular construction with side seams	50
Fairydown New Zealand www.zonenz.com											
 Zone Short Sleeve Top	SS	105	PD	3	Yes	M: S-XXL W: XS-L	CN, ZN CN	●●●	●●●	Flat-lock stitching	60-80
Zone Long Sleeve Top	LS	155	PD	3	Yes	M: S-XXL W: XS-L	CN, ZN	●●●	●●●	As above	70-90
Gondwana China www.gondwanaoutdoor.com.au											
 Thermacore	LS	na	PE	1	Yes	XS-XXL	CN, VN	●●●	●●●	Brushed inner fabric surface	40
Helly Hansen Portugal/Switzerland www.hellyhansen.com											
 Lifa Sport 48816	SS	100	P	1	Yes	M: S-XXL	CN, VN	●●●1/2	●●●	Flat-lock stitching	60
Lifa Dynamic Crew 48519	LS	110	P	1	Yes	W: XS-XL	CN, VN	●●●●	●●●	Moves moisture by capillary action	100
Icebreaker New Zealand www.icebreaker.co.nz											
 Skin	SS	180	SW	2	Yes	M: S-XXL W: XS-XL	CN, SN, ZT	●●●●	●●●1/2	Fine wool, comfortable next to skin	70-95
Skin	LS	220	SW	2	Yes	M: S-XXL W: XS-XL		●●●●	●●●1/2	As above	85-160
Intertek New Zealand											
 Short Sleeve	SS	na	P	1	Yes	XS-XXL	CN, VN	●●1/2	●●●		35
Long Sleeve	LS	170	P	2	Yes	XS-XXL	CN, ZT, VN, ZP	●●1/2	●●●	Kids' sizes available	40-70
Kathmandu China www.kathmandu.com.au											
 Polypro	SS	na	P	1	Yes	XS-XL	CN, VN, ZP	●●1/2	●●●		30-40
Thermacore	LS	na	Th	1	Yes	S-XXL	CN	●●●	●●●1/2		40
Lowe Alpine Germany www.lowalpine.com											
 Dryflo	SS	180	DF	1	Yes	M: S-XXL W: XS-XL	CN	●●●●	●●●1/2	Available in seamless construction	55-65
Dryflo	LS	na	DF	2	Yes	M: S-XXL W: XS-XL	CN, ZP	●●●●	●●●1/2	As above	60-110

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Thermal tops continued

Model/ description	Style	Weight, grams	Fabric	No of fabric weights	Matching pants	Range of sizes	Range of styles	Performance	Value	Comments	Approx price, \$
Macpac New Zealand www.marpac.co.nz											
 Zip Zap	LS	160	PG	1 (multiple fabrics)	Yes	S-XL	ZP	●●● 1/2	●●●	Combination of fabrics for shoulder warmth and wicking of lower areas	130
Flipside	LS	160	PG	1 (multiple fabrics)	Yes	S-XL	ZP	●●● 1/2	●●●	Reversed fabric combination for front wind protection	130
Marmot China www.marmot.com											
 Drizone	LS	170	DC	2	Yes	M: XS-XL W: XS-XL	CN, VN	●●●	●●●		100
Mountain Designs New Zealand www.mountaindesigns.com											
 Short Sleeve T-shirt	SS	140	P	1	Yes	XS-XL	CN	●● 1/2	●●●	Uses Austrian Scholler yarn	35
Long Sleeve Top	LS	170	P	2	Yes	XS-XXL	CN, ZP	●● 1/2	●●●	As above	40-60
Netti Outdoor Essentials Australia www.netti.com.au											
 Arctic	SS	na	SW	1	Yes	S-XXL	CN	●●●	●●●●	Short and long pants available	55
Arctic	LS	na	SW	1	Yes	S-XXL	CN	●●●	●●● 1/2	As above	65
Paddy Pallin Australia www.paddypallin.com.au											
 Coolmax Tee	SS	125	C	1	No	M: S-XL W: 10-16	LS, T, ZP	●●●	●●●		60-85
Techzip	LS	240	PD	1	Yes	M: S-XL W: 10-16	CN, T, ZP	●●●	●●●		70-85
Sherpa China www.sherpa.com.au											
 PCD II	SS	150	P	1	Yes	XS-XXL	CN, LS, VN	●● 1/2	●●●	Soft hand	30
Cooldry	LS	200	PE	1	Yes	XS-XL	PN, SS	●●●	●●●		35
Sierra Experience China											
 Teez T	SS	na	PE	1	Yes	XS-XXL	CN, ZP	●●●	●● 1/2		50
Smartwool China www.smartwool.com											
 Aero	LS	na	SW	1	Yes	S-L	CN	●●● 1/2	●●		160
Snowgum China www.snowgum.com											
 Hotbods Short Sleeve	SS	na	P	1	Yes	M: S-XXL W: 8-18	VN, CN	●●●	●●●	Wool version available	30
Hotbods Long Sleeve	LS	na	P	1	Yes	M: S-XXL W: 8-18	VN, CN	●●●	●●●	As above	35
3 Peaks China www.wildernesswear.com.au											
 Long Sleeve Top	LS	160	SP	1	Yes	S-XXL	CN, VN	●●●	●●● 1/2	Spun polypropylene	30



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Thermal tops continued

Model/ description	Style	Weight, grams	Fabric	No of fabric weights	Matching pants	Range of sizes	Range of styles	Performance	Value	Comments	Approx. price, \$
Vigilante China www.vigilante.com.au											
 Torneo	SS	na	P	1	No	M: XS-XL W: 6-16	CN	●●1/2	●●1/2		60
Landeck	LS	na	P	2	No	M: XS-XL W: 6-16	CB, PN	●●1/2	●●1/2		110
Weft Industries New Zealand www.weft.co.nz											
 Polartec Short Sleeve	SS	na	PE	1	Yes	M: S-XXXL W: XS-XL	CN, LS, ZP	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	Kids' sizes available; Hollowcore PE fibre	30-45
Thermady Long Sleeve	LS	na	P	1	Yes	M: S-XXXL W: XS-XL	CN, SS, VN, ZP	●●●	●●●	As above	20-40
Wilderness Wear Australia www.wild.wm.csw.wa.com.au											
 Long Sleeve Crew	LS	220	PD	1	Yes	XS-XXXL	CN	●●●1/2	●●●		60
Chlorofibre Thermal T	LS	210	CL	1	Yes	XS-XXXL	CN	●●●1/2	●●●	No shoulder seam; flat seams	\$5
<p>● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent Style: LS long-sleeved, SS short-sleeved Fabric: CL chlorofibre, Coolmax (polyester), DC Driclime (polyester), DF Driflow (polyester), Polypropylene, PD Powerdry (polyester), PE polyester, PG Portentortort-Geotex (polyester), SP spun polypropylene, SW superfine merino wool, Thermacore (polyester), Thermolacryl Size Range: Mens, Womens. All sizes described without an M or W designation are unisex. Range of Styles: CB button crew neck, CN crew neck, LS long sleeve, SN scoop neck, PN polo neck, SS short sleeve, T T-shirt, 2T two-tone colours, VN V-neck, ZN zip neck, ZP zip polo na not assessed † not seen by author ‡ not seen by referee The country listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made</p>											

binds to fibre proteins and keeps the wearer dry where fabric and skin meet. Natural fabrics tend to be slightly more expensive.

Developments in synthetics. Synthetics as a whole are traditionally considered to be better performers than natural fibres when it comes to 'wicking'. Wicking is the ability of a base-layer fabric to draw moisture rapidly away from the wearer's skin. Generally, fabrics with effective wicking properties transport body vapour rapidly to the next layer of clothing, leaving you drier and warmer.

Synthetic thermal fabric has developed at a frantic pace. Many new materials have appeared that further improve wicking performance and combine soft texture (or 'hand') with low-odour retention and high thermal efficiency. The extent of these developments is too complex to give more than a cursory mention in this survey—studying the Web site of each manufacturer will provide sufficient information to help you to decide.

Range of sizes

Many manufacturers provide both women's and men's sizings and some also produce a children's range. Where there is only a single entry in the column (for example, XS-XL), the thermals come in unisex sizes.

Range of styles

This column lists style features such as crew neck (CN), scoop neck (SN), two-tone colour (2T), zip neck (ZN) and zip polo (ZP). Other features are listed under the 'Comments' heading.

Performance

This rating is subjective, balancing a number of assessment criteria. These include moisture absorption, wicking ability, odour resistance, drying speed, warmth, overall fit and comfort. It is an opinion based on personal experience, the data supplied by the manufacturer and close examination of every garment (except where samples were unavailable—indicated in the table).

Value

This column shows a subjective (and I hope not too contentious) rating based on the reviewer's comparison of performance and retail cost. It is intended as an opinion-based guide *only*, and is not a hard-and-fast assessment. An attempt has been made to give a subjective opinion moderated by objective technical data.

Comments

Anything else of note is shown in this column.

Price

Prices shown are recommended retail prices as supplied by the distributor or manufacturer.

Other brands available

Brand	Distributor	Contact
Feathertop	Sitro Group	www.sitro.com.au

Holeproof	Holeproof	(03) 9210 2517
iZWool	iZWool	www.iZWool.com
Karrimor	Aktiv8	www.aktiv8.com.au
Lafuma	Lafuma Australia	(02) 4966 4900
Merino Skins	KTENA Knitting Mills	www.wool-underwear.com
Mont	Mont	www.mont.com.au
Mountain River Sea	Outdoor Survival	(03) 9775 1916
Nomex	World Surplus	(03) 9587 9977
The North Face	Playcorp	www.thenorthface.com
Pearl Izumi	Pearl Izumi	www.pearlizumi.com
Peter Storm	Peter Storm	www.peterstorm.com
Silkbody	Paradox Products	www.silkbody.co.nz
Swandri	Alliance Textiles NZ	www.swandri.co.nz

Starting as a wide-eyed schoolboy in the Blue Mountains near Sydney, for two decades Grey Cairns has been climbing, cross-country skiing and sea kayaking in various parts of the world. The happiness and warmth of poor, rural peoples around the globe are a constant source of inspiration to him.

This survey was refereed by Scott Edwards



Lexan® Wine Glass & Flute

GSI Lexan® Wine Glasses & Flutes are the perfect addition for your next camping trip or picnic. The patent-pending design unscrews at the midpoint of the stem, so the base can be compactly snapped into the bowl for packing and storage. Super lightweight and nearly indestructible, yet elegantly shaped.

Bugaboo™ Teflon®/Aluminium Cook-sets



DiamondBack Gripper™ and mesh storage-bag included

Glacier Stainless Steel™ Cook-sets

Glacier Stainless Steel™ cook-sets are finely crafted culinary pieces for the practising gourmet and are crafted from 18/8 stainless steel. The mirror-bright finish looks great! All pieces have rounded corners for easy cleaning and serving. The sets nest compactly and the lids act as fry pans.

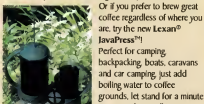


DiamondBack gripper and mesh storage-bag included. The five- and seven-piece sets include a bonus nylon mini-spatula.

Espresso...



Treat yourself to an absolutely delicious espresso with these compact little appliances! They are crafted from rugged yet lightweight aluminium. Simply fill the basket with well-ground coffee, add water to valve level and screw the unit shut. Place it on your stove at low heat and within minutes, the steam pipe delivers a flavourful cup of European-style brew. Available in one- and four-cup sizes: red, blue, green or polished.



Or if you prefer to brew great coffee regardless of where you are, try the new Lexan® JavaPress™! Perfect for camping, backpacking, boats, caravans and car camping, just add boiling water to coffee grounds, let stand for a minute or two and you will have a perfect cup of fresh coffee. The GSI JavaPress is dishwasher safe and can also be used for preparing tea! Available in two sizes: 280 ml and 925 ml.

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Lexan® Waterproof Utility Boxes



LEXAN® Waterproof Utility Boxes are nearly indestructible, and available in three sizes. They are clear, so you can see what's inside, and have attachment loops to tie them down securely!

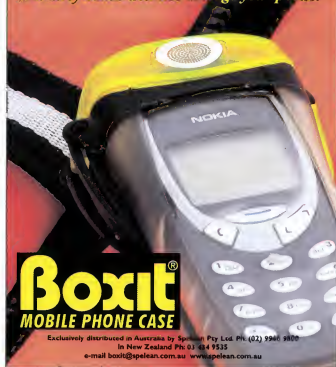


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Macpac goes offshore

Macpac Wilderness Equipment will begin to **manufacture offshore** later this year with a resulting loss of 150 production-related jobs. Bruce McIntyre, founder and Managing Director of Macpac, said that the strong New Zealand dollar and slump in the outdoors market following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 have led to Macpac losing over \$1 million in the last 18 months, prompting the company to make this decision. It was also forced to lay off a number of management staff last year.



Can't guess the brand, but the model is a Weka.

It is claimed that Macpac is the last international outdoors brand in the world to manufacture at home. Seventy per cent of production is exported. (It is worth noting that One Planet and Pitch Black are two of the very few Australasian rucksack manufacturers which still manufacture locally.)

As smooth as silk

As mentioned in the thermals survey in this issue, there is a **new thermal fabric** on the market that threatens to be as revolutionary to the market as superfine merino wool. **Silkbody** is a New Zealand company that manufactures base-layer garments from a combination of silk and wool. The fabric is claimed to be lightweight, very comfortable (got to have that silken feeling) and quick drying, with good wicking and temperature regulation properties. They still have not perfected the 'self-washing' techno-



logy but, apart from that, it sounds fantastic! Two weights are available, finespun (72 per cent silk, 13 per cent wool, 15 per cent cotton) and the slightly heavier cellular (80 per cent silk, 20 per cent wool). There is no local distributor as yet but a range of garments is available from www.silkbody.co.nz. Prices for a thermal top range from \$79–\$120.

Invisible Woman chooses Silkbody thermals.

MAD DOGS AND GRAMPIAN

One Planet has released a revamped range of **day packs** said to have many of the features of its larger rucksacks. The packs range in capacity from 40 to 47 litres; small packs indeed for the adjustable harness featured on three models. The names have stayed although the features have changed, so the familiar **Vertex**, **Mad Dog**, **Traverse** and **Grampian** might not look quite the same. They range in price from \$149–\$249. Visit www.oneplanet.com.au for further information.

Macpac has also released two new models into the day-pack showroom. The **Tekapo** and **Weka** are made from the durable Aztec fabric and have AirSupply harnesses which are claimed to improve stability and comfort. Each pack comes in two back lengths and a variety of volumes, with the Tekapo available in an amazing six sizes! For the gear freak with everything, why not buy the range? The Weka looks a little different, opening through a zipped flap running the length of the front panel. This apparently allows easy access into the pack and a good view of the contents. Prices range from \$149–\$299. For further information, see www.macpac.co.nz

More brand identification problems; model Vertex.



EXPEDITION DOWN UNDER

Exped has produced a **down-filled air mattress** that is said to give three times the warmth of any other mat of similar weight. The feather-bed for camping is also 'sinfully comfortable' according to field reports—you shouldn't feel that rock under your head, let alone the pea ruining your royal rest. It is claimed that the standard model has a fill of 250 grams of high-loft goose down, weighs 1080 grams including the (essential) pump (which doubles as the

stuff sack), and measures 30 x 13 centimetres when packed. The air mattress has interconnected chambers with two valves for easy deflating. Foam barriers and baffles prevent down from moving between chambers and eliminate cold spots. The standard (178 x 52 centimetres when unrolled) and deluxe models (198 x 66 centimetres) are available from Aktiv8; phone (02) 9939 5611. RRP \$320 and \$429, respectively.

Knick-Knacks

* **Marmot** has a new **sleeping-bag** which is neither down nor synthetic—it uses a combination of the two. The **Fusion** uses the Dualmax system which places a quilted layer of goose down next to the skin throughout the bag, surrounded by a shingled layer of synthetic insulation. This is claimed to combine the comfort, warmth and compactability of a down bag with the moisture management of a synthetic bag. The bag is available in two

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models, the Fusion 30 and Fusion 15. Phone **LA Imports**, (02) 9913 7155 for further information. RRP \$399 and \$449, respectively.

- * A new brand of food is on the market with the catchy slogan 'Curry under the stars'. **Tasty Bite** is a new range of **ready-to-eat vegetarian meals** which only need to be heated (by boiling a pouch) before serving. They have an 18-month shelf life and come in a variety of



Curry in a hurry?

flavours including **Madras Lentils** and **Green Peas Pilaf**, although at 285 grams a meal they may be a gourmet extra. They are available from Durina, phone (02) 9874 9694. RRP from \$5.99.

- * **HighGear** has a range of **navigation instruments** available including altimeters, pedometers, digital- and analogue compasses. The **Compass Hi** we examined is a nifty little gismo with an electronic compass, alarm, timer, chronograph and thermometer in a water-re-

HighGear Altitech altimeter.



sistant case that clips on to your pack with its in-built karabiner clip. Phew! Contact **Spelean** for more information, phone 1800 634 853. Prices range from \$152 for the Compass Hi to around \$325 for the altimeters.

- * **Berghaus** parkas and packs have been in Australia since the dawn of time (well, almost). Its extended **clothing range** is now available as well including the Gore-

trix Lightweight reading

Greg Blackman takes
his inspiration on
the track

If you are tired of lugging your favourite hefty volume, why not look into these lightweight titles for enlightening tent-bound or bedtime reading.

Penguin 60s and Phoenix paperbacks put out a range of tiny volumes (around 50 pages 11 x 14 centimetres each) that weigh and cost next to nothing but have substantial contents.

Examples in Phoenix include William Blake's 'Songs of Innocence and Experience', 'A Guide to Happiness' by Epicurus (341-270 BC), Thomas Gray's 'Elegy in a Country Churchyard and Other Writings', and Rudyard Kipling's 'If' (and other poems). Two delicious Penguin 60s volumes are 'Walking' by Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson's 'Nature'.

In a larger format (though still lightweight) try Dover Thrift Editions—Thoreau's 'Selections from the Journals' and Walt Whitman's 'Selected Poems'.

Wild welcomes readers' contributions to this section: payment is at our standard rate. Send them to the address at the end of this department.

Tex, Aquafoil and Polartec lines in men's and women's styles. **Nalgene**, well-known for its leak-proof bottles, has released a new range of **hydration packs and bladders** that use medical-grade materials and have water-filter compatible openings. Prices start at \$49.95 for the bladders and \$89.95 for the packs. Berghaus and Nalgene are distributed through **Outdoor Agencies**, phone (02) 9438 2266.

- * Reader Richard Whittington has written to us about a phenomenon he has observed with his **Mini Trangia stove** resulting in flare-ups in rare circumstances if the wind causes the flames to blanket the base. He claims that under these conditions a temporary vacuum can be created which sucks all the methylated spirits out of the burner and into the base. He claims that the holes in the base of the stove are not sufficient to deal with this situation and wonders whether adding more would assist in dealing with it. Readers experienced in the use of this stove are invited to comment. ☹

New and innovative products of relevance to the rucksack sports (on loan to *Wild*) and/or information about them, including high-resolution digital photos (on CD, not by email or colour slides, are welcome for possible review in this department. Written items should be typed, include recommended retail prices and preferably not exceed 200 words. Send them to *Wild*, PO Box 145, Pahrna, Vic 3181 or contact us by email: editorialadmin@wild.com.au

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POSTERS

We have unearthed a minor treasure trove of previously sold-out *Wild* posters (all 420 x 297 mm and laminated). Even the Viking poster (pictured on page 11) is almost sold out, so you'll have to move quickly. (Some may be slightly damaged.)

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- The Overland Track from Mt Pelion, Tas
- Cape Woolamai coast, Vic
- The Viking, Vic

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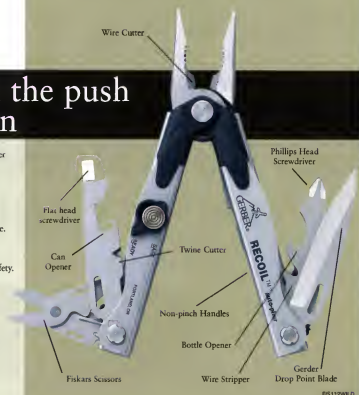
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GOOD NEWS for Australian wilderness

There have been significant wins for the Australian conservation movement during the last few months. On 17–18 May, the Australian Government has placed a temporary halt on all new land-clearing applications. At present more than three-quarters of Aus-

On 25 March, legislation was introduced that allowed the leases to be cancelled, saving the 250 square kilometre area from future sand-mining proposals. In 1976 it was suggested that Shelburne Bay be protected as a National Park—despite this win, much still needs to be done to secure its future.

community resistance, with more than 15 000 people assembling in Fremantle to take part in Australia's largest gathering for marine conservation. The development was rejected by Geoff Gallop, the Western Australian Premier, who now intends to seek World Heritage listing for the spectacular area.

In another piece of good news, the Australian of 12–13 July reported that the South Australian Government has decided to create a National Park to protect the Coongie Lakes wetlands in the far north-east of SA. The Coongie Lakes system is a wetland of international importance which supports a diverse range of bird- and wild-life species. Some birds travel from Europe to reach the wetlands, which can have more than 50 000 ducks or pelicans on the water at one time.

Mining and grazing will be banned in the 300 square kilometre park, with mining giant Santos agreeing to cease exploration of one of the world's most significant wetlands. Over 1500 square kilometres will be protected in total, with mining prohibited in an additional area surrounding the new park. The State has been in talks with stakeholders, such as Santos, and conservation groups since June 2002, with protection



tralia's annual clearing takes place in the Sunshine State.

The land-clearing moratorium will not apply in some cases, such as applications for weed control or public safety, or to those whose applications have already been submitted. The move has been greeted positively by conservationists whilst the State's peak rural group, AgForce, has condemned the government for its lack of public consultation. Prime Minister John Howard declared his support in a letter to the Queensland Premier, Peter Beattie—a positive sign, as in the past a deal on land clearing between Queensland and the Commonwealth has stalled over the levels of compensation to be paid to farmers.

Also in Queensland, Shelburne Bay has been saved from sand-mining, as reported in *Wilderness News*. Located on the Cape York Peninsula, the Shelburne Bay region is widely recognised to be an area of great natural heritage significance, with nationally important dunes, forests, wetlands and lakes. Mining leases over the dune fields have existed since 1967 as, despite the conservation values, the 100 metre high dunes represent possible monetary profit. The inactive mining leases were due to expire on 28 February this year although the leaseholder was seeking to renew them for a further 14 years.



New protection for South Australia's bird-rich Coongie Lakes. Chris Baxter

Ningaloo Reef, 1200 kilometres north of Perth, is the world's second-healthiest coral reef, with populations of endangered dugongs, hump-back whales, loggerhead turtles and manta rays. The Wilderness Society reports that until recently it was also the site of a proposed marina and resort complex that had caused years of protesting. The marina proposal led to huge

for the area expected to be in place by early next year.

▲ Act now

Visit www.wilderness.org.au for more information about these issues and to find out what you can do to end land clearing in Queensland.

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World Heritage properties protected

Australia's attempt to weaken the protection given to World Heritage properties was defeated by the World Heritage Committee in March, as reported by the *Colong Bulletin* in May. Australia did not get the two-thirds majority vote it needed to force the changes despite support from the USA and the UK, among others. The objectives of the bid were: to limit independent investigations of actions that could damage World Heritage properties; to allow countries to veto the removal of their properties from the list, or the listing of their areas as 'in danger'; and to require the World Heritage Convention to protect only the particular values for which a property was listed rather than the outstanding universal values and integrity of the site.

This defeat may force changes to be made to the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* to ensure that the integrity, rather than just the listed values, of our World Heritage sites are protected. Among other outcomes, this could stop Bass-link eroding the banks of the Gordon River

(see *Wild* no 89) and prevent future mining in the Blue Mountains.

Meanwhile, work continues on the Alps/south-east forests World Heritage proposal (see *Wild* no 40). The proposed area covers the highlands of Victoria, NSW and the Australian Capital Territory, protecting the 'sea to snow' array of eucalypt-dominated vegetation as well as the alpine flora. Geoff Mosley reports that, despite the inevitable complications caused by the involvement of four governments, further progress has been made in identifying areas suitable for nomination and providing some with greater security, particularly in the south-east forests. A Memorandum of Understanding which aims to increase cooperative management of the alpine region was signed by the Alpine Ministerial Council in May. It is yet to be seen how this will work but cooperation is sorely needed—in early July there were ten separate inquiries and reviews concerning different aspects of the alpine section of the proposed area, four of them inquiries into the summer bushfires.

STYX and STONES



The demonstrators' march extends like a giant serpent into the distance at the protest against logging Tasmania's Styx Valley. Ted Mead

On 13 July more than 2000 people rallied near some of Australia's tallest trees to protest against old-growth logging in Tasmania's Styx Valley, the Age reported on 14 July. The rally was held near the remote Valley of the Giants, 90 kilometres from Hobart, on a cold, rainy day. Its success surprised even The Wilderness Society, which offered thanks to those who came and apologies to those who missed the rally due to parking and traffic problems.

Over 1770 hectares of Tasmania's old-growth forests were logged in 2001–02, in what writer Richard Flanagan calls 'a

national tragedy'. The Styx Valley has become a key site in the campaign to save Tasmania's old-growth forests, with more than half of the area logged or scheduled to be logged in the future (see *Wild* no 82). Conservationists believe the fight to save the Styx can only be won if the campaign follows the path of the Franklin protest and gets those on the mainland involved. Terry Edwards, chief executive of the Forest Industries Association of Tasmania, defended logging the Styx, claiming the forest has been logged for 60 years and represents \$750 000 in jobs.

Logging water catchments leaves Melbourne thirsty

A major review of Melbourne's water use late last year has recommended that the Victorian Government assess the impact of moving logging out of water catchments and into plantations, reported the *Age* on 3 May. After logging, the young trees that regenerate in Melbourne's water catchments use a huge amount of water. An estimated 20 000 million litres of water a year would be available to the city if logging were phased out, enough to fill 20 000 Olympic swimming pools.

Logging in the water catchments does not just affect the quantity of water available. There are also concerns about possible water pollution and the destruction of the environment as the catchment forests are the home of wildlife and used as carbon sinks.

Logging provides hundreds of regional jobs and provides about \$3.8 million in royalties for the State government each year. However, the value of 20 000 million litres of water in Melbourne is around \$15 million at current retail prices. Maybe the final decision on this issue will be based on economics, not on the environment.



Protest against the logging of Melbourne's water catchments. Eli Greig

TOXIC TOURISM

Dutton Downs is a well-populated area on the edge of the Gippsland Lakes, Victoria. It is in a high rainfall area surrounded by wetlands of international importance (as listed under the Ramsar Convention), yet the State Government has recently approved it as the Victorian dumping ground for contaminated soils and low-level radioactive waste. This is just phase one of a three-

phase plan to increase the level of toxins that can be dealt with there. It has a history of leaking ponds.

The cartoon was drawn after the Tourism Minister sang the praises of the Lakes while launching the new tourist brochure in the same week that the Planning Minister approved the new toxic waste dump.

Jill Redwood

TOURIST BROCHURE LAUNCH 2005



Wood-chips

- The Victorian National Parks Association reports that the Victorian Government has signed the **planning permit** for two

new ski-lifts at Falls Creek which have subsequently been approved by the Federal Government. The lifts will open the pristine area next to Mt McKay for downhill skiing despite the very high flora and

fauna values in the vicinity, including colonies of mountain pygmy possum and other threatened species. The lifts approved would allow access to a third ski-lift on Mt McKay should this ever be approved or built. The area was burnt by the January fires leaving the area's fragile soils exposed. State government conditions aim to protect the area by stipulating minimum snow depths for skiing, only allowing overhead lifts and monitoring the mountain pygmy possum. With the current economics of ski resorts and changing climate, it remains to be seen whether the lifts will be built.

- The National Parks Association of NSW is organising the **Great Australian Bushwalk on 25 October**. The NPA is aiming to 'walk across NSW in a day', with free bushwalks arranged throughout the State. There will be lunches, barbecues and other events after the walks. To find walk locations or to register, phone the NPA on (02) 9299 0000 or visit www.npansw.org.au
- A regeneration burn by **Forestry Tasmania** has **killed Australia's largest tree**, El Grande, reports The Wilderness Society. According to Forestry Tasmania, the tree had been protected from the burn in a nearby logging coupe. However, an inspection of the tree by an experienced botanist found massive damage to the root system from path-clearing machinery, intense burning inside the hollow tree and the loss of huge branches from the canopy. The inspection found the tree to be dead from roots to crown. The Wilderness Society has written to the Forest Practices Board to ask for an investigation.
- Judy Henderson, one of the founding directors of **Bush Heritage** (*Wild* no 89, page 79) has announced her intention to pass her block of land on to the organisation, as reported by *Bush Heritage News*, winter 2003. The block backs on to the **Central Plateau** World Heritage Area in Tasmania, near Bob Brown's Liffey River and Drys Bluff Reserves. It will help to build a significant protected area which will be managed along with its neighbouring Liffey reserves.
- A **poster** showing Miyo Langsangma, Goddess of Chomolongma (Mt Everest) has been produced to commemorate the **50th anniversary of the first ascent of Everest**. The limited edition poster is a print of a thangka (scroll painting) commissioned from Tenzi Sherpa, a monk living in the SoluKhumbu region of Nepal. Proceeds from the sale of the poster will be used to fund the thangka painting school and other cultural activities in this area. The poster costs \$59.50 including postage within Australia. For further information and to view the poster, go to www.travelto/kathmandu

Readers' contributions to this department, including high-resolution digital photos or colour slides, are welcome. Items of less than 200 words are more likely to be published. Send them to *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181 or email editorial@wild.com.au



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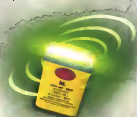
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Dave Swift and Alison Danforth, Parc National des Ecrins, France. Photo: Tony West

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Hinchinbrook Island—A Sacred Wildness

by Steven Nowakowski (Little Ramsay Press, 2003, RRP \$34.95 soft cover, \$44.95 hard cover).

This beautiful book was produced to raise the profile of Hinchinbrook Island and win friends and protectors for the threatened World Heritage Area. The sumptuous photography is supported by poems from Liz Downes which are relevant, well-written and reflect the magic of the outstanding images.

The history, environment, cultural heritage and threats to the future of the island are outlined, giving the reader a



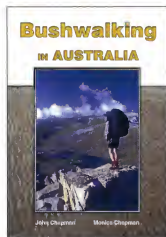
good overview. This is a stunning book produced for a good cause and it is to be hoped that it achieves its aim.

Megan Holbeck

Bushwalking in Australia

by John & Monica Chapman (published by the authors, fourth edition 2003, RRP \$39.95).

First published 15 years ago, the current edition of the 'Australian Bushwalking Bible' is very different from the relatively primitive first edition. It sets the standard that (many) others seek to follow.



Today, *Bushwalking in Australia's* 320 pages are brim-full of colour photos. The full colour topographical maps particularly deserve comment for their clarity and, dare I say it, appear to be idiot proof! There are many other nice touches including temperature and rainfall charts, a profile of the height gained and lost on each walk, and tags in each walk description showing the precise distance walked as every conceivable landmark is reached.

Readers will argue until Cradle Mountain has been eroded away about the walks included and those left out. I'd have to say that the authors certainly seem to have gone for

variety in their selection, with some surprising inclusions. (Western Australia has done well with five walks, whereas there are none from south-east Queensland.) The ensuing debate will no doubt continue to keep the Chapman name alive around camp fires for decades to come!

Chris Baxter

The Walks of Flinders Island, The Walks of King Island, The Walks of the Mornington Peninsula and The Walks of Port Campbell and the Shipwreck Coast/The Walks of Volcano Country

all by Ken Martin (Seadrift Publishing, 2001–2003, RRP \$11.95 each).

A series of booklets ranging from 32–40 pages describing one-day walks in southern Victoria and the Tasmanian islands. The walk descriptions are generally adequate but lack detailed directions on finding the starting points. They are also without maps of each walk, and most of the notes are for strolls of less than two hours. Overall the booklets seem aimed at family groups and beginners. Useful if seeking new places in which to spend a couple of hours. ☺

John Chapman

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